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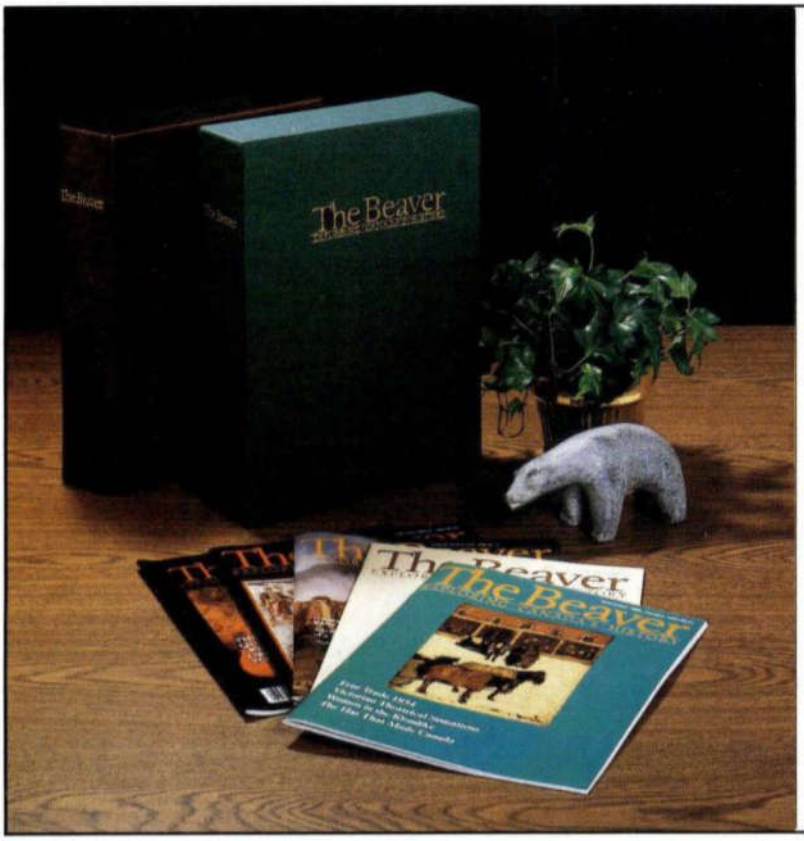
The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

Defending Canada's Cultural Identity
Mr. Dawson's Road
Fred Tibbs, Eccentric Islander



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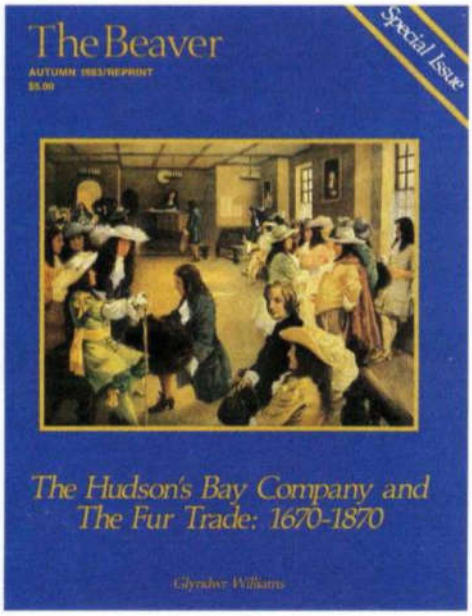

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By GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

86 pages. Illustrated

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The Beaver

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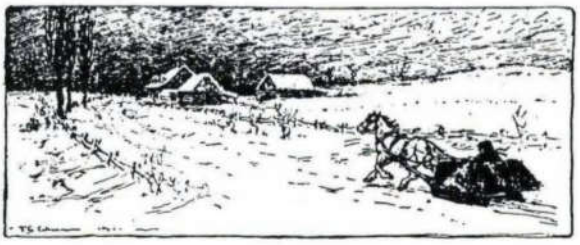


Making Our Gardens Grow

For much of the last half of this century Canadians have been preoccupied with the vexing questions of national identity and cultural survival. These themes, in fact, have become a kind of *lietmotiv* in the music of Canadian national life. To outsiders, we Canadians must present a curious spectacle with our royal commissions, our conferences and seminars and our seemingly endless questioning. Who are we? Why are we here? Do we have a culture? What, if anything, makes us unique?

"Morose scrutiny of Canadian culture", critic Robert Fulford wrote in the *Tamarack Review* in 1958, "has in recent years become a national amusement almost on the scale of professional hockey". The search for identity moved into high gear after World War II and reached its first great milestone with the establishment of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, known to history as "The Massey Commission", after its co-chairman, the patrician Vincent Massey. The Massey Report did not, of course, provide the final word on Canadian culture and identity. The debate and the soul-searching continue to this day and now form a part of the greater debate about whether Canada can survive as a nation.

It was a much different Canada in 1949 when Vincent Massey, Father Lévesque and their fellow commissioners set out on their search for Canadian culture. In the years since their report was published, the Canadian cultural scene has altered out of all recognition. In 1954, the novelist Robertson Davies could write: "Why does a country like Canada, so late upon the international scene, feel that it must rapidly acquire the trappings of older countries — music of its own, pictures of its own, books of its own — why does it fuss and stew, and storm the heavens with its outcries when it does not have them?"

In an article beginning on page 21 of this issue, J.M. Bumsted, who teaches history at the University of Manitoba, examines various attempts between the Massey Commission of 1949 and the O'Leary Commission of 1960, to locate, identify, define and protect the elusive Canadian cultural identity in the face of a great tide of American "popular" culture flowing across the "longest undefended border in the world".

Canadian worries about cultural identity led to the creation of the Canada Council, regional arts councils and a far greater degree of government participation in cultural activity than had previously existed in this country. As far as we know, John A. Macdonald had no arts policy; Wilfrid Laurier never attempted to sweep the West with promises of increased funding for community orchestras. In our own time, questions of culture and identity have found an important place on the national agenda, are discussed at election time and have their own representative at the cabinet table. Culture has become a national issue.

It is common enough nowadays to wonder whether we really need things like the Canada Council or whether government funds might be better spent on roads and public swimming pools. In a speech at the presentation of Governor General's Awards in Vancouver a few years ago, West Coast painter Jack Shadbolt noted the current widespread indifference to the Canada Council and reminded younger members of the audience of what the Canadian cultural scene had been like before the Massey Commission recommended the establishment of the council. Many of the older members of the audience remembered only too well.

In its 1951 report the Massey Commission noted the apparent Canadian cultural dependency upon the United States: "We benefit from vast importations of what might be familiarly called the American cultural output. We import newspapers, periodicals, books, maps, and endless educational equipment. We also import artistic talent, either personally in the travelling artists or company, or on the screen, in recordings and over the air. Every Sunday tens of thousands tacitly acknowledge their cultural indebtedness as they turn off the radio at the close of the Sunday symphony from New York and settle down to the latest American Book of the Month".

Our own "cultural output" was at a depressingly low ebb in 1951. Theatre was almost dead, except for one or two small "semi-professional" groups and a number of amateur companies in the "little theatre" movement. The publication of a Canadian novel was a national event. There were only a couple of symphony orchestras and they were struggling to survive. Ballet was fighting to stay alive in Toronto and Winnipeg. Canadian publishing houses were few and far between. Canadian music was seldom performed and when it was many audience members complained. Opera consisted almost entirely of Metropolitan Opera

broadcasts on the "Texaco Network". There was no Canadian film industry and little hope for one. If you were a Canadian musician or pop singer there was little chance of making a recording and, if you did, little hope that it would ever be broadcast on the air. Few Canadians made a living as actors or musicians. Recognition for Canadian artists had to come first from foreign audiences. Canadian visual artists were slightly better off than their musical and theatrical friends, but few of them found markets for their work.

As Mordecai Richler wrote in the 1960s, Canada a decade earlier had been a cultural wasteland: "Here a professor, there a poet, and between thousands of miles of wheat and babbitry".

In the past 40 years the situation has changed dramatically. The status quo of 1950 has been reversed in almost every instance. There is now a Canadian professional theatre which operates from coast to coast. There are opera companies and symphony orchestras in the major cities. Canadian writing is flourishing, with Canadian authors celebrated around the world. Audiences sit still and listen to Canadian music and queue up to attend plays by Canadian playwrights. Canadian films have received recognition. There is a Canadian popular music industry. A large crowd of Canadians earn a living in the arts field. A number of Canadian periodicals enjoy wide readership. There are ballet companies across the nation and touring Canadian dance groups attract favourable attention around the world.

We may continue to question the merit of our artists and ask whether our cultural institutions are as good as they might be, yet the fact remains that we have come a long way since the Massey Report was tabled in 1951.

The questions of culture and identity, however, are never finally settled. They remain on the national agenda. In 1983 the federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (the Applebaum-Hébert Committee) noted that progress had been made since the days of Vincent Massey, but suggested that much remained to be done. Canadian cultural institutions appeared to be reasonably well established, and yet the artists themselves had lagged behind. "A few artists at the top of their fields are, of course, materially well rewarded," said the Applebaum-Hébert Report. "However, the evidence is overwhelming that Canada does not provide an adequate living for most of its professional artists. It is clear to us that the largest subsidy to the cultural life of Canada comes not from governments, corporations or other patrons, but from the artists themselves, through their underpaid labour. When creative activity is diminished because many artists are unable to earn a decent living, something is lost to us all, and our entire culture fails to fulfill its purpose".

In the years since Applebaum-Hébert the situation for Canadian artists has not improved significantly and now as the 1990s begin even the cultural institutions stand in peril. A falling level of support from government for institutions such as the Canada Council and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has renewed fears that the accomplishments of the last 40 years could be threatened. Such government measures as the imposition of the new Goods and Services Tax on books

UNCLE SAM KICKED OUT!

YOUNG CANADA.—"We don't want you here."
JOHN BULL.—"That's right, my son. No matter what comes, an empty house is better than such a tenant as that!"

"Johnny Canuck" applies the toe of his boot to "Uncle Sam" while "John Bull" and his bulldog look on with complacent approval. This piece of Canadian jingoism was published two years after Confederation.

and periodicals, the severe cutbacks in the postal subsidy provided to Canadian publishers and book-sellers and a general disinclination to support cultural expression seem to indicate that difficult times lie ahead for Canadian artists, Canadian art and Canadian unity.

At a time when Canada is going through difficulties and divisions that could lead to the breakup of the country, the sustaining power of national culture is needed as never before. Culture is the shared dream that binds scattered groups of men and women into a nation. We have created a northern nation with its own dreams and ideals and we must never give up the struggle to preserve it. ♦

Mr. Dawson's Road

By Jack Manore

The Fathers of Confederation were very conscious of the long, unwatched western border between British North America and the United States. Established in 1818 east of the Rocky Mountains, and by 1846 treaty west of them, the border ran along the 49th parallel of latitude from Lake of the Woods to the Pacific. It had been marked by the Royal Engineers west of the Rockies in the late 1850s and early 1860s, but on the Prairies it was no more than a line on the map. The sovereign power in the whole vast area between the mountains and Canada was the British Government, but they kept not one official there, and the only civil authority lay with the Hudson's Bay Company.

A suspicion that the British negotiators of the 1846 treaty had been "taken" by the Americans through British ignorance of the value of the Oregon Territory prompted a desire for more knowledge of the West. The Palliser Expedition of 1857-59 was an attempt to provide this. Palliser revealed many facts about the country, including the existence of passes through the Southern Rockies, but he doubted that the Canadian Shield north of Lake Superior would ever be successfully breached. His report was read with great interest but little came of it at the time.

It was obvious to many that there must be some all-British route between Canada and the Red River Settlement. This settlement, of about 12,000 people in 1870, comprised descendants of Lord Selkirk's colonists, people of mixed blood and Canadian immigrants, mostly from Ontario. With the idea of learning what was "out there" the government of the Canadas despatched the "Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition" in 1857 (the same year as Palliser's) to investigate, among other things, the possibility of opening communication between Canada and the West. A private company was organized in Toronto at the same time to carry mail, as a response to growing agitation on the Red River for annexation to Canada. This company used the old fur-trade canoe route west from Fort William, and only lasted a couple of years.

The 1857 Canadian expedition's leader was Henry Hind and its surveyor was a 37-year-old Scottish-born civil engineer, Simon J. Dawson. He recommended a land and water route from a point on Thunder Bay just north of Fort William, to Fort Garry, with wagon roads at both ends. The centre part of the road, 311 miles long, would be by lake and river, almost as it had been in fur-trade days, including ten portages totalling just under eight miles. A horse-cart road would by-pass the difficult Kaministiquia River and Dog Lake route by carrying traffic the 45 miles from Thunder Bay to Lake Shebandowan. West of Height of Land Portage, between Kashabowie Lake and Lac Des Mille Lacs, the rivers would all be flowing westward. A western cart road of 95 miles, from Lake of the Woods to Fort Garry, avoided part of that lake, the Winnipeg River, Lake Winnipeg and the Red River.

Events pushed thoughts of such projects to one side. A financial depression beginning in 1857 precluded any great capital schemes, and indecision about how to assume the Hudson's Bay Company's powers halted progress for the time being. Indeed, some influential politicians thought that westward expansion was beyond the country's need and capacity.

But the end of the American Civil War in 1865 released thousands of soldiers looking for adventure, some of whom had already staged abortive raids on Canada; and the United States bought Alaska from the Russians in the same year as the Canadian confederation. This purchase effectively hemmed in the Crown Colony of British Columbia on both north and south, and it seemed to the Fathers in the late 1860s that something had to be done and done quickly. Otherwise, they feared, the space between the mountains and Lake of the Woods would soon be filled with Americans.

The 1869 purchase by the Canadian Government of the Hudson's Bay Company's vast western lands, moreover, made it all the more imperative to set up an all-Canadian route for settlers, mail and freight.

Simon Dawson was again called upon to recommend in detail a suitable route and, in an 1868 report, using in part his earlier survey, he recommended the same route but with certain refinements. His portages would be serviced by permanent employees stationed at them, with horse or ox-drawn wagons, and there would be food and "commodious buildings" for selected stopovers. Steamboats would tow barges on the lakes and rivers, and some river levels would be raised by dam-

National Archives of Canada

Kashabowie Station, transport point at the head of Lake Shebandowan on the Dawson Route, from a painting by William Armstrong, 1870.

ming to eliminate awkward reaches and portages. Dawson's road between Thunder Bay and Fort Garry, he estimated, could carry 100 lbs. of freight for $2 as compared with the $5 cost of transporting them by rail through the United States to St. Paul and by steamer down the Red River to the settlement. Obviously, the road could be travelled in both directions, but its main purpose was to carry eastern Canadian goods and settlers west.

Dawson's plan was approved and he began work in 1868 with a crew that peaked at 800 workers. The job consisted of clearing the line along the surveyed route, ditching, bridging (the bridge over the Kaministiquia River was 320 feet long), and laying corduroy road over gravel which had to be hauled to cover the largely clay soil. Accommodation for people, stables for animals, and store houses had also to be constructed.

By the spring of 1870 the uncompleted road was to have a major test. Colonel Garnet Wolseley chose parts of the route to move his 1,200 British and Canadian soldiers and their *voyageurs* from Thunder Bay to Fort Garry in response to the Red River Resistance.

Wolseley and his men made the journey without losing a single man through illness or injury, and his approach to Fort Garry, 96 days out of Toronto, caused Louis Riel and the few men remaining with him to decamp. But the Expedition, while proving that *anything* is possible, left behind a good deal of rancour among those involved in constructing the road.

Shortly after the expedition, Wolseley published an anonymous account in a British magazine of this last operation by British troops in North America. He had much to say about Simon Dawson's road, and his comments were similar to those in his official report of the expedition.

To begin with, Wolseley had been informed that the two roads (at the east and west ends of the water route) would be completed and ready for his use. It was not until the expedition's arrival at Thunder Bay on 25 May by steamboat from Collingwood that Wolseley had discovered the true state of affairs. Because he had to set "some of his companies" to completing the last miles to Lake Shebandowan, the expedition was delayed. "I have assisted him [Dawson] in every way

Simon Dawson: "A man of even temper".

in my power," wrote Wolseley, "carting sand for him, transporting supplies . . .". His men, he continued, "worked at it [the road] as if the Old Gentleman himself were driving them forward . . .". They split rock by Hannibal's method of first heating the rocks with fire, then cooling them suddenly with water. (Actually, Hannibal used wine, but Wolseley thought this to be extravagant.) It seems incredible in 1870, even for the British Army, to use such an antique method, as there must have been plenty of explosives about. Also, because the prairie section of the road was impassable, the expedition had to use the "dangerous" Winnipeg River. Dawson was a man of even temper, wrote Wolseley, and this was a good thing because some of Dawson's assistants were political appointees and "often drunkards or incapables" or "loafers". There was one, for example, nephew of a minister and of no particular talent, who was on the job because he wished a free trip to Manitoba.

This story caused Dawson to lose his reported equanimity. In an indignant rebuttal, he informed the Minister of Public Works that there was scarcely a word of truth in it. Wolseley, he wrote, must have been fully aware of the state of completion of the eastern road, *i.e.* 25 miles of wagon road, 12 miles of ox road and the rest being opened, and the western road hardly begun, because he, Dawson, had reported this to the ministry and he could not conceive of the ministry telling Wolseley anything different. Dawson knew the Winnipeg River well, and it was not nearly as dangerous as alleged. (On this point *he* was stretching the truth, because other contemporaries stressed the river's difficulties, and he had avoided it with his own route.) And the last of Wolseley's stores did not arrive at Thunder Bay until long after his own arrival, so any suggestion that working on the road had caused undue delay was absurd.

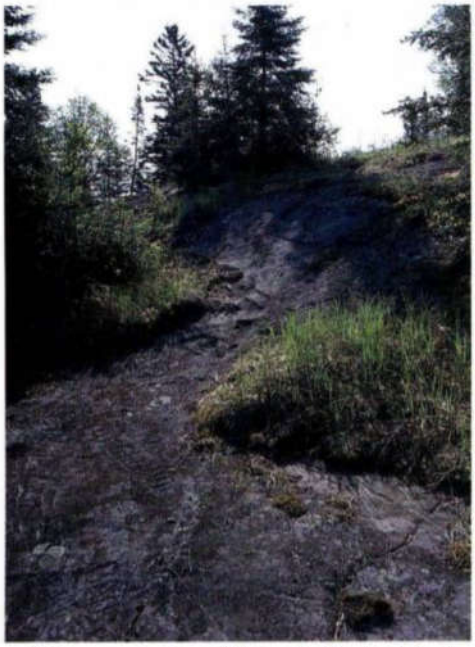
Furthermore, if Wolseley had followed Dawson's advice and sent for carts to carry the expedition's boats from Thunder Bay to Shebandowan instead of taking them up the Kaministiquia River, a great deal of time would have been saved and the boats would not have had to be repaired. He was particularly sensitive on this point for he had gone to great pains to have the boats built in yards as far east as the Isle of Orleans, and had to repair them when damaged. Dawson proved that boats could be safely and easily transported by cart over the corduroy road because he so moved 28 of them in four days without damage, while the other 121 took 120 men a month, and these were skilled axemen who should have been working in the bush. There were no political appointees in Dawson's crews, and no one related in any way to a cabinet minister. There was one young man though, Dawson admitted, who delighted in telling tall tales. And, the soldiers were paid, $1,829.88 for their 5,433 man-days of work.

In all of this long report, Dawson gives many names, but manages to avoid mention of Wolseley's, calling him only "the Colonel in immediate command of the expeditionary Field Force". Obviously, the two did not get on. The passage of so large a body of men could not fail to do damage to some of Dawson's constructions, and Wolseley on at least one occasion was less than direct with Dawson over a matter of the soldiers' daily ration of drink.

After Wolseley's passages (he returned to the East before freeze-up with some of his troops), Dawson continued his work on the road, and it was opened for civilian traffic on 15 June, 1871.

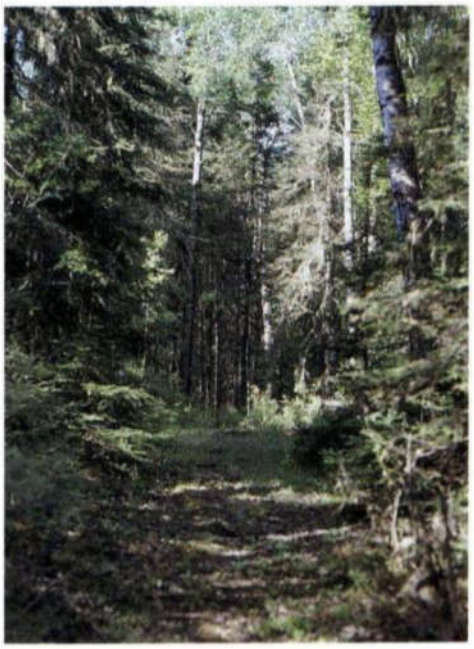
Travellers were looked after by the Department of Public Works through an "Emigrant Transport Service". By the spring of 1872, Dawson reported that teams drawing from 1,800 to 2,200 lbs. could make the round trip from Thunder Bay to Shebandowan in three and a half days, and in the following year he estimated that the road could carry from 1,200 to 1,500 passengers per month. This rate was never achieved, partly through lack of customers and partly because of contractors' difficulties in getting steamers built at Fort Frances.

Between its opening in 1871 and October 1873, the road carried 2,739 people, of whom 805 were settlers. Travellers paid $25 a head between Thunder Bay and



"The name-carving rock" near the Height of Land Portage on the Dawson Route, photographed in 1988 by Michael Manore.

The Height of Land Portage as it appears today.



"M. Nicholson" paused on the way West in 1887 to carve his name in the living rock near Height of Land Portage.

Fort Garry (later reduced to $15 — children under 12 half price). They had a free baggage allowance of 150 lbs, and could not bring horses, oxen or heavy farming implements. They were expected to carry their own supplies, but were to be allowed to buy provisions at cost at major depots. Passengers were, according to Dawson, "brought from Lake Superior to Fort Garry with, at least, as much comfort to themselves as was experienced by those passing through the United States, and at far less cost". In fact, American carriers in time reduced their rates to meet the Canadian competition.

Before 1871 was out, Dawson's road had its second military expedition, only this time the road was finished and ready. He learned on 16 October that there had been a Fenian raid at Pembina and that Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, Adams Archibald, had "sent for troops". He was already standing down his crews for the winter but was able to stop their dispersal and prepare for the arrival of the troops at Thunder Bay eight days later. This expedition, of 200 volunteer militiamen, was carried from Thunder Bay to Lake Shebandowan in 34 hours, then pushed on through skim ice to Fort Garry, arriving there on 18 November. Their journey from Collingwood had taken 28 days. Wolseley's expedition from Shebandowan to Fort Garry had needed 40 days.

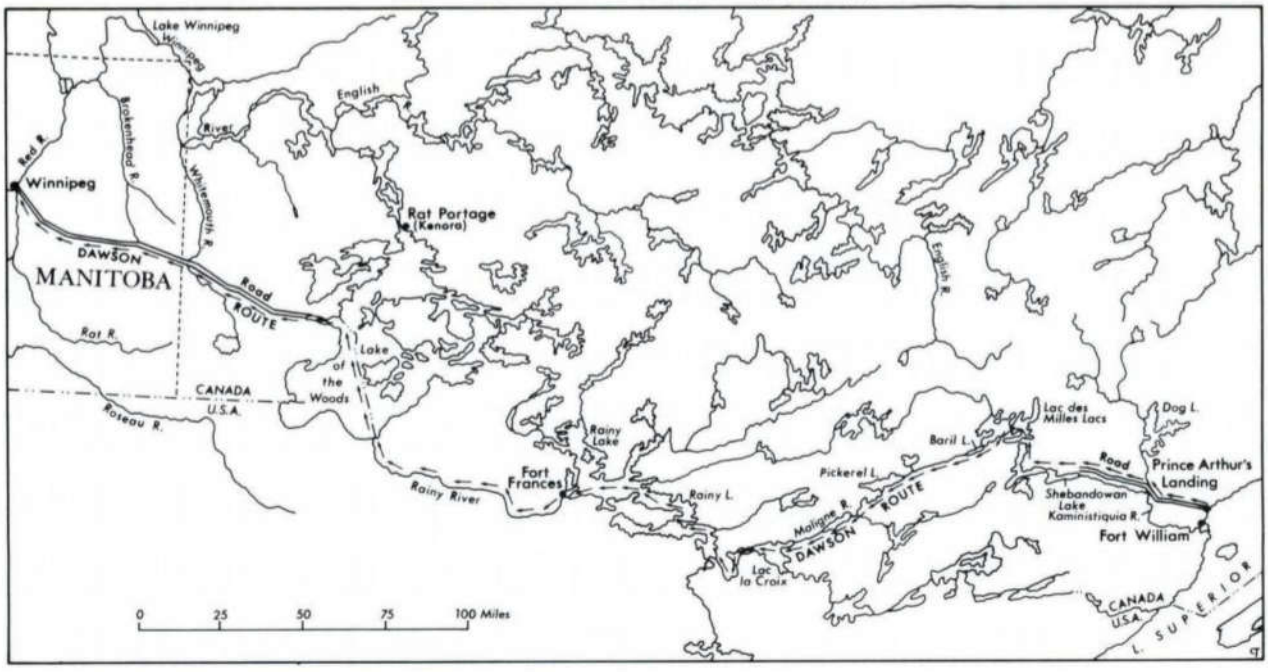
The next travellers of note to use the road were the members of an expedition led by Sanford Fleming to inspect the "great territorial road" which would be the transcontinental railway. The party's secretary was the Reverend George M. Grant of Halifax, and he recorded their progress across the country, including passage from Thunder Bay to Fort Garry between 22 July and 2 August, 1872.

There were about 100 buildings of various descriptions at Prince Arthur's Landing (later Port Arthur, now part of the city of Thunder Bay) when the party landed from their steamer. They went by buggy in two days to Shebandowan. The road boasted "capital bridges", but toward the western end was "heavy". Then they embarked in two light canoes with their *voyageurs* and began the water journey towed behind a steamboat. After Height of Land portage they came to Lac des Mille Lacs with its "innumerable bays, creeks, channels, headlands and islets . . . . Through these labyrinths we threaded our way, often wondering that the wrong passage was never taken, when there were so many exactly alike". Actually, at least one of Wolseley's experienced guides *had* become lost on this beautiful lake.

The western road from Lake of the Woods across the prairie was covered by wagon in a marathon 20 hours. The 95-mile road was not very smooth, but Grant recorded the way-stations along the way as more or less comfortable, although he did not sleep at any of them.

This small party made the trip in 10 days, but they were helped along the way by having their own canoes and expert *voyageurs* — one had served Sir George

The Dawson Route, Prince Arthur's Landing to Winnipeg.



The Dawson Road Station at the south end of Lake Shebandowan, drawn for "The Canadian Illustrated News" by William Armstrong, 1870.

Simpson on lightning trips around his Hudson's Bay Company empire. Grant thought that settlers dependent upon "public" transport might make the journey in about two weeks.

Not many of them made it in that time. The next year the government contracted the services along the way to a private company which, having a fixed subsidy regardless of how many pilgrims they handled, set out to discourage as many as possible. Complaints multiplied about truculent and unhelpful employees, overloaded, leaky boats, carelessness in baggage handling, mean shanties for lay-overs, poor food, and generally miserable treatment. One man allegedly spent 25 days in transit, arriving at Fort Garry half-starved, injured, and very, very angry, his baggage ruined. Dawson went to investigate and confirmed that things were not as they should have been.

In that same year of 1874 an American railroad was completed from Duluth to the Red River. As it was obviously easier and quicker to take a steamer to Duluth, a train to the river and another steamer to Fort Garry, it would have taken a super-patriot to endure the Dawson route. American carriers, too, attempted to entice travellers to their routes by detailing the general wretchedness of Dawson's. For these reasons, and also because a railroad had by then been promised, Dawson recommended that government work be stopped on "his" road. This included abandoning unfinished locks at Fort Frances on which $289,000 had already been spent. Dawson also quit his job in 1874 and went into politics.

Of course the road remained and some people continued to use it: in 1876 1,590 passengers endured its undoubted discomforts. But that was the last year any government money was spent on it. The railroad which would provide the all-Canadian, all-season route to the West was still nine years in the future.

Dawson's route cost $1,300,000 and almost no vestige of it remains. The Lake Superior end lies under the Ramada Prince Arthur Hotel, and the name is perpetuated in a short stretch of city street in the city of Thunder Bay. Ontario highways 102/586 follow roughly the original eastern cart-road. Historical plaques mark some significant spots, and the portages are still discernable, used now only by canoe trippers in their quest for wilderness adventure. The site of Upper Fort Garry is part of modern Winnipeg.

Simon Dawson served as a Conservative MLA for Algoma 1875-78, then as a Member of Parliament from 1878 until the year before his death in 1902. He is not remembered as a parliamentarian, but for his Route to the West which, had the times and circumstances been just a little bit different, might have played a more important part in Canada's history. ♦

Jack Manore is a retired naval officer living in Victoria, British Columbia. His last article for "The Beaver" was "William Francis Butler and the Great Lone Land" (October/November 1986). The colour photographs that accompany his article are by his son, Michael Manore.

THE PRISON AT KINGSTON, CANADA WEST

'So Irksome and So Terrible'

By Peter Hennessy

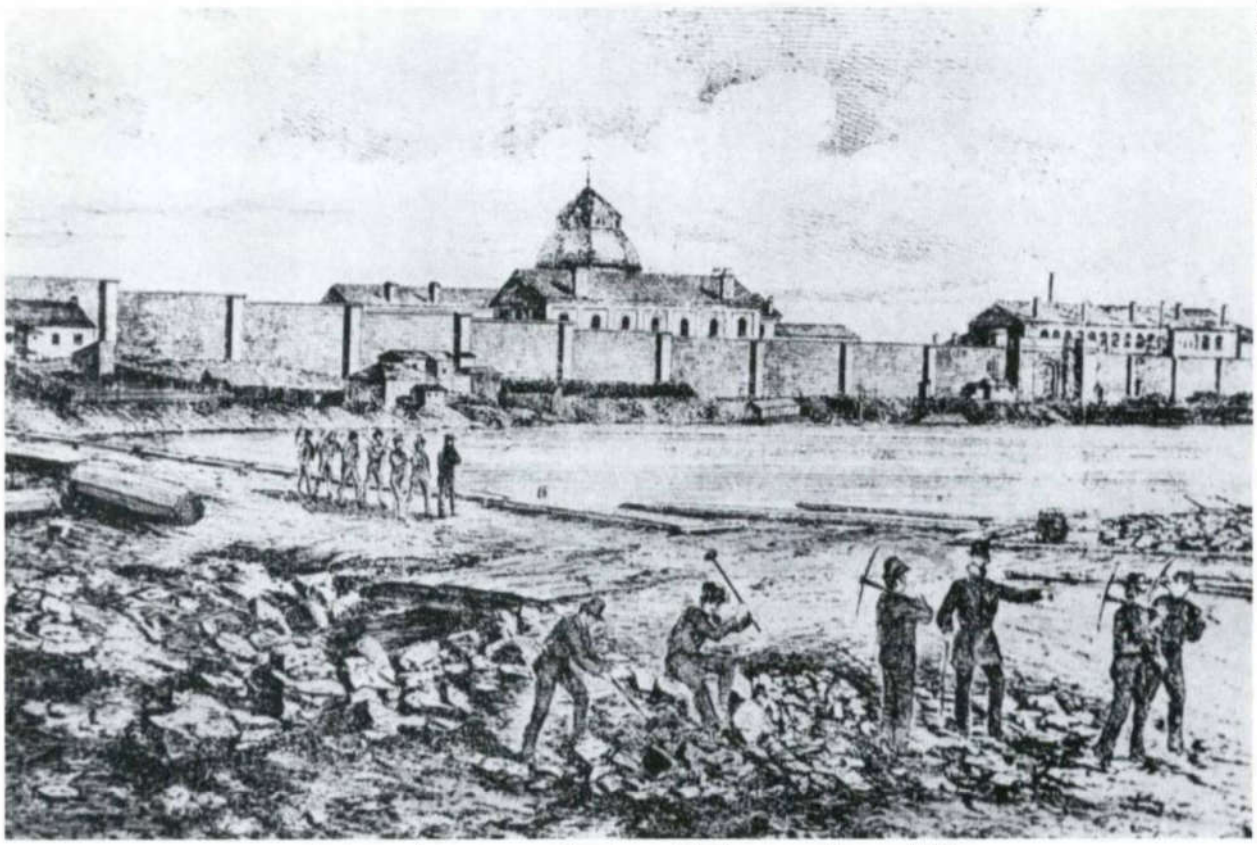
When James Hennessy of Ameliasburg fatally stabbed his wife in the course of a foolish quarrel over the correct way to clean and carve a newly slaughtered pig on an October day in 1841, he could not know that his name and what reputation he had would be laid before the most powerful men in Canada. Nor did he perceive, through his drunken haze, that he would be locked up in a cesspool of political corruption, cruelty, and depravity for several long years.

James was arraigned before Judge Christopher Hagerman in the Spring Assizes, 1842. The judge was the son of Nicholas Hagerman, Loyalist, who took up land at Adolphustown, a favoured spot at the entrance to the Bay of Quinte. The elder Hagerman was a lawyer and prominent citizen of early Upper Canada. His son, Christopher, was educated by Bishop Strachan in the best Anglican tradition after which he studied law under his father. In practice later, he occasionally confronted his father in court. During the War of 1812 Christopher served as an officer in a company raised at Adolphustown. Thereafter he was appointed aide-de-camp to the governor, an invaluable springboard to Tory preferment for the remainder of his career. He was one of the power figures in the Family Compact through the 1820s and 30s, with Kingston as his political base. In 1840, he accepted a judgeship on the Court of King's Bench after which he became Solicitor-General of the United Canadas in close association with John A. Macdonald.

Hagerman was married to Elizabeth, daughter of the Tory jurist, James Macaulay of Kingston. Hagerman, together with the prominent Kingston merchant John Macaulay and Hugh Thomson (ancestor of Lord Thomson of Fleet) constituted the committee that recommended the construction of the Provincial Penitentiary in Kingston. Their report called for a prison that could "be a place by every means not cruel and not affecting the health of the offender, shall be rendered so irksome and so terrible that during his after life he may dread nothing so much as a repetition of the punishment . . ."

Accordingly, the Penitentiary at Kingston was built in 1835 on 10 acres of land about a mile west of the town. The site was nearly ideal. It possessed a quarry of the best limestone for the construction of the buildings and walls by the hard labour of the hapless inmates. Overlaying the rock was a mantle of well drained clay soil for the gardens, yards and fields of an institution designed to accommodate up to 500 men, women and children. Not least among its advantages, the property sloped away gently to the shore of Lake Ontario on the south side and to a fine little harbour on the west side. Its location was convenient for boats bringing supplies, officials and new convicts to the doorstep of the prison. It was even more convenient for draining away the vast amounts of human and animal wastes into the forgiving waters of the big lake.

The first Board of Inspectors, the local governing authority of the prison, was made up of five local luminaries: C.W. Grant, John Macaulay, John S. Cartwright, Alexander Pringle and W.H. Gray. The first warden was Henry Smith, a well known man in the community who had a rapidly rising lawyer son, Henry Jr. and a younger son of less certain prospects, Francis W. Smith. By October of 1835 there were 55 convicts in the prison, 52 males and 3 females. Seven years later, Judge Hagerman sentenced James Hennessy to 10 years hard labour for manslaughter. The disastrous and terrible tenure of Warden Smith, 1835-1848, overlapped the time actually served by James, 1842-1849. The operating principles of the prison which the warden was supposed to implement were copied from the penitentiary at Auburn, New York, where convicts were required to labour and live in each other's company, but in strict silence. The rule against talking, which also barred communication with family and friends except through the warden, was founded on the notion that the silent convict would, through continuous reflection upon his sins and transgressions,



Queen's University Archives

A prison work gang quarrying limestone outside the prison walls around 1850.

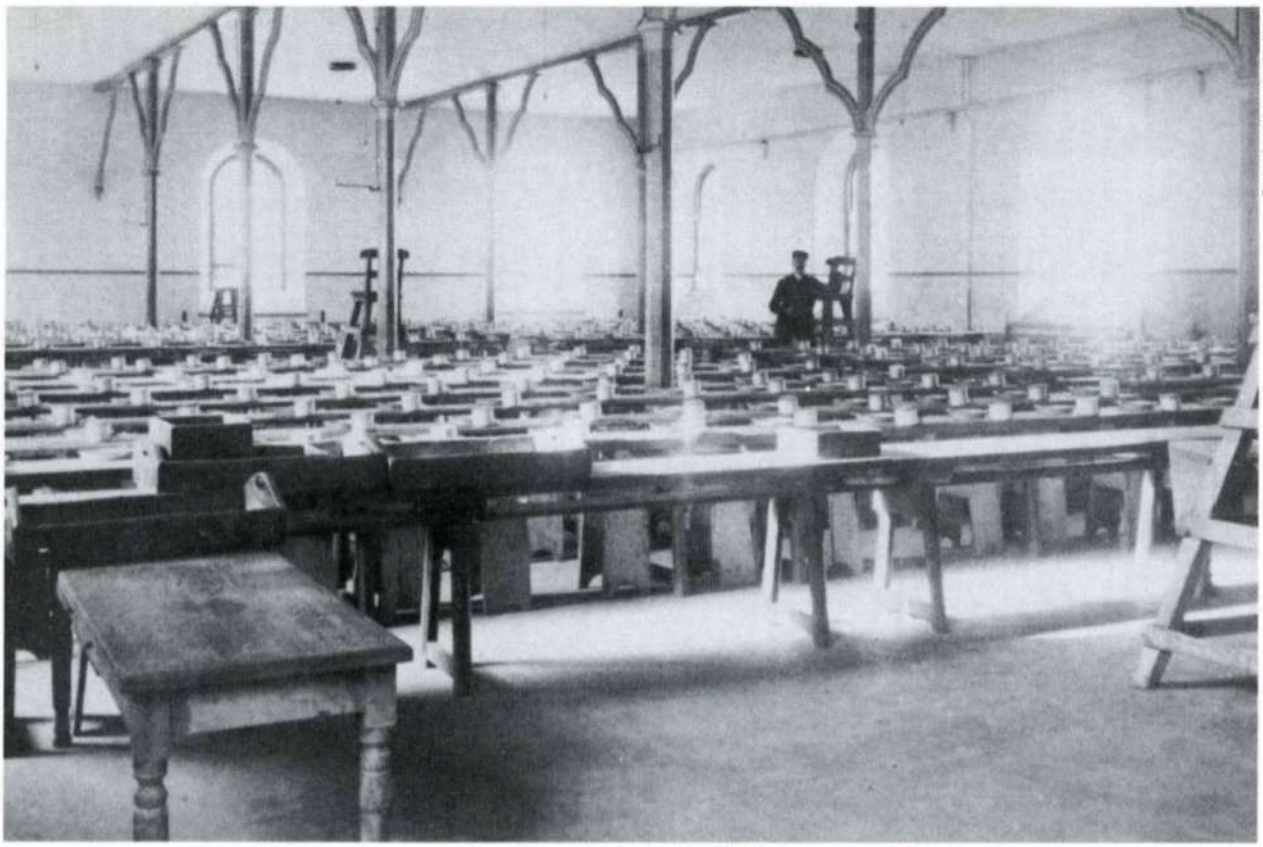
try to become a better person. Various punishments as necessary, including corporal punishment, would help the transgressor to become penitential and desirous of reform. Judging from the condition of the Provincial Penitentiary in 1848, these founding principles quickly atrophied as human degradation from the top down became the norm.

By the time James Hennessy was led through the gates in numbed bewilderment in May of 1842, there were 160 inmates, including 7 women. When he left in haste in March of 1849, there were at least 475 prisoners. More rapidly than the increase in the prison population was the growth in corruption and cruelty within the prison management. In 1842, according to the prison records, there were 341 punishments inflicted — just under one a day. As a result of spiralling sadism over the next few years, the total punishments reached 6,063 in 1847 — a seventeen-fold increase during a three-fold increase in the number of prisoners.

The cells where the prisoners spent their nights were like mail slots for human bodies. Stacked five storeys high and ranged in rows the length of the south wing, each cell was 27-inches-wide and 6½ feet long. The only furnishings were a 24-inch-wide iron bed, hinged to the wall in the daytime, and a waste bucket at the foot of the bed near the grated door. On the beds there were straw ticks and rough wool blankets. The single amenity provided for each cell was a Bible but there was no artificial light to penetrate the gloom of the cell. During the cold season, heat from large wood stoves on the first floor entered each cell through a square grate high on the end wall. Without bathing facilities the prisoners were rank with sweat and grime when they flopped down on their bunks for the night. They slept in their work garb.

Halfway between the levels of each range of cells, there were enclosed alley ways with peep holes opposite the cells so that guards and other officials could walk the ranges unseen by the prisoners. The effect of the walled alleys was to prevent a prisoner from seeing any other prisoner from his cell.

Food rations were ample on paper, though the combined effects of fraud, bread and water punishments and lowest grade food from the suppliers left many prisoners under-nourished. The worst of these conditions coincided with the regime of Kitchen Steward Francis Smith, from his nepotistic appointment in 1846 till his dismissal in 1848. His father was the warden.



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The prison dining room, late nineteenth century. The rule of silence was strictly enforced.

Frank Smith fraudulently sold large amounts of food supplies to prison staff. As Kitchen Steward, he exercised his fearsome power by cutting the rations of prisoners who offended him and by over-feeding his favourites. Any prisoner who complained to Smith that he was still hungry might be sentenced to three meals of bread and water as a lesson in self-restraint. Some softhearted prisoners kept aside some of their ration for those on bread and water. Hunger complaints were most frequent in summer when meat was often tainted and sometimes inedible. It was common to see convicts taking mash from the pig troughs for their own consumption. Indeed, one keeper testified that he regularly allowed his work gang to steal from the hogs so that his convicts could get more work done.

Because of the immense amount of work to be done to finish the prison, the typical sentence to hard labour meant exactly that. Prisoners were labelled and organised into gangs according to their experience and talent. In 1846, there were 88 masons, 71 stonecutters, 19 carpenters, 24 blacksmiths and 113 common labourers. As well there were gardens and various shops like shoemaking, tailoring and metal-working which depended on prison labour. During the latter part of his sentence, James Hennessy was a stableman who fed and took care of the oxen, cattle and fowl, including the warden's personal livestock.

For some odd reason, the prison messenger, Thomas Smith, was responsible for harnessing the horses and yoking the oxen for routine work. Smith's practice was to go to the rotunda at the beginning of the day and march the stable convicts to their animals. When the stable convicts returned for meals they joined the gang to which each was regularly attached. James Hennessy probably had more chances to talk and laugh occasionally; anyone who works with domestic animals has a talking relationship with them, one that is equally beneficial to man and beast.

James was a good prisoner by the usual standard, but he was never a mollycoddled favourite. His first year, 1842, was the worst year; he was enduring the pangs of conscience over the death of Diana, hurting for his separated family and hating the place to which he was confined. For a reason not specified in the Punishment Book, he was given 6 strokes of the rawhide, a whip of braided leather about a yard long, thick at the handle and tapering to a point. The victim was tied to a tall wooden triangle and there, under the

silent gaze of the other convicts, endured the strokes, each of which raised a dark welt and often a slight ooze of blood.

Twice in December of that first year, James was sentenced to bread and water. After that, the Punishment Book remained silent about James Hennessy till 1847, possibly the most hideous year in the history of the prison. Retribution, revenge, repression and regimentation were now the dominant forces at work in the management of the prison. The shy stableman was punished five times in that year of horrors, in March for having tobacco hidden in his sleeve and four times for talking.

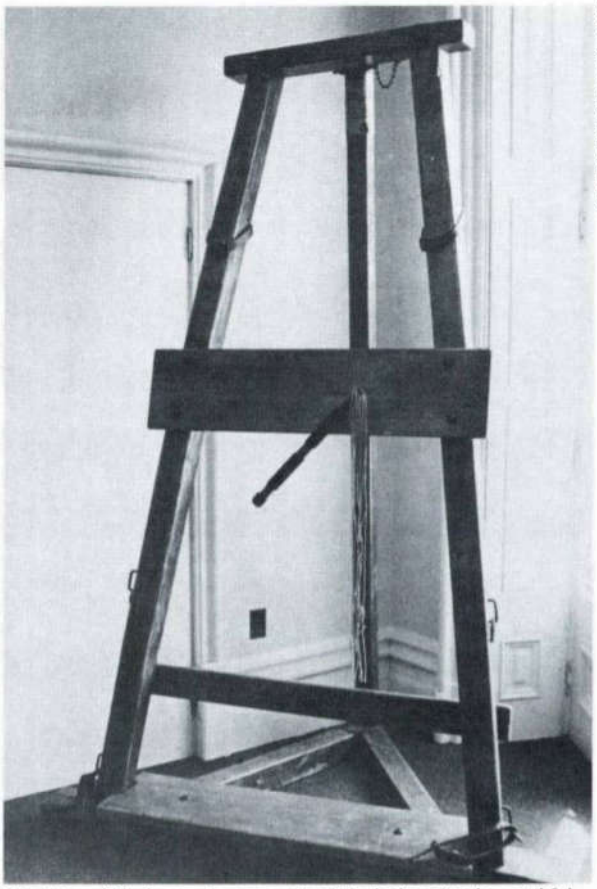
The tobacco offence landed James in the "Box", a device modelled after the old-style coffin. With the prisoner jammed in tight and the door locked, the Box stood on its end for six to nine hours at a stretch. Sadistic keepers like Frank Smith sometimes poked prisoners with sharp instruments through the air hole in the box. The released prisoner, scarcely able to walk, had to get his pain-wracked body back to his cell as best he could.

In his final full year in prison, 1848, James was recorded in the Book six times. Five of those breaches were trivial: going to the watchmaker's shop without permission, not marching in with his gang and sitting in the wrong place, talking at work and taking bread from the table while under punishment. Meals of bread and water were imposed. The sixth, in May of 1848, exemplified the Hennessy temper out of control: "Striking Convict Cotter with his fist and taking a piece of wood to strike him". For that, James was confined to the "Dark Cell" on bread and water for 24 hours.

A couple of years earlier, James would almost certainly have been punished with the "Cats" over the Cotter incident. The cat-o'-nine-tails was a fiendish whip consisting of nine knotted ropes extending from a handle. The Cats were used over 100 times in 1846 but, fortunately for James, hardly at all in 1848 when, for whatever reason, he attacked the other convict. The number of strokes varied from six to fifty. By the fifth stroke the blood was dripping from the back and chest, so that by the end of the flogging the convict's body was a mass of lacerations.

The worst effect of the floggings, worse than the lingering sores and the itching scabs, was psychological rather than physical. A man whose flesh was flayed off him in the presence of his peers lost his self respect, his sense of worth, his power to face up to authority. These fiercely negative feelings could only be expunged by more violence or the victim's own death.

There were few uplifting influences in the prison to counterbalance the pervasive moral rot. The two chaplains, Protestant and Catholic, were part-timers and nearly powerless to change things. Chaplain R.V. Rog-



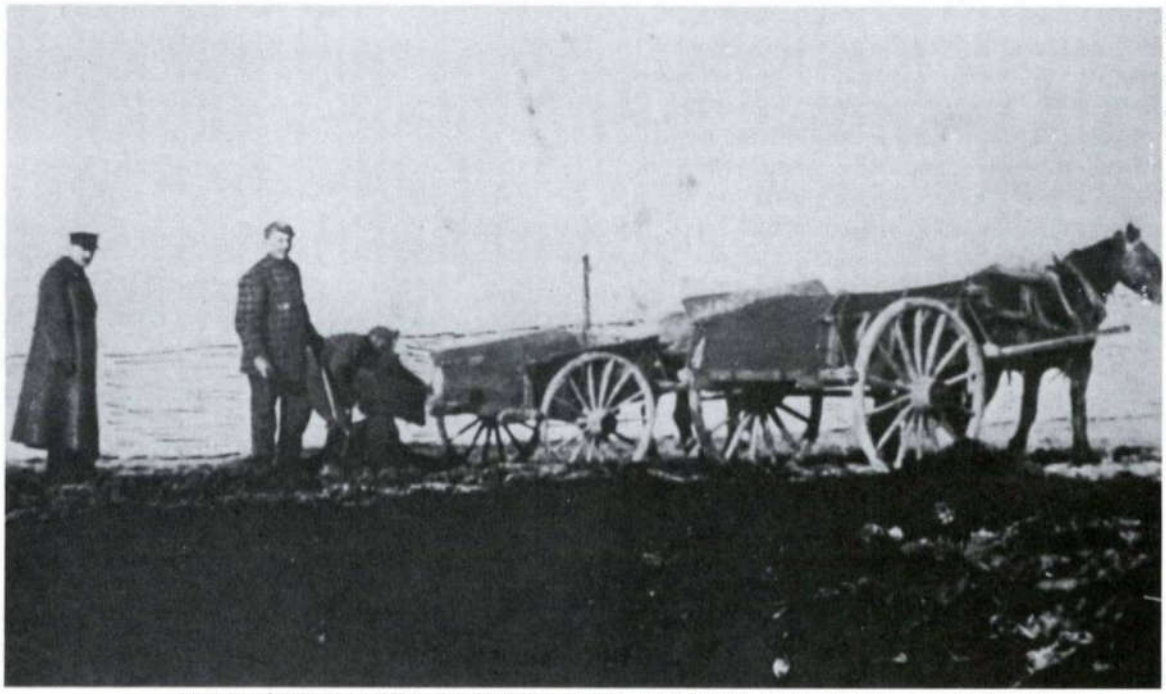
Kingston Penitentiary Museum

The "triangle" where prisoners received the lash under the watchful eye of the prison surgeon who could halt punishment if necessary. A cat-o'-nine-tails hangs on the panel.

ers of the newly built St. James Anglican Church did not enjoy the confidence of Warden Smith for the simple reason that Rogers deplored Smith's management of the prison. The chaplain was offended that there were handsome stone stables for the horses but no chapel for worship. Grace was not said before meals. There was no school nor library. Three times a week at the end of a meal hour, convicts were allowed to read to each other and that was about the extent of the education program. Prisoners were not allowed to exchange books.

The chaplains were forbidden by the warden to hear convicts' complaints of bad treatment. Neither were they informed of who was to be punished. Despite these strictures, the chaplains knew what was going on. Chaplain Rogers testified before the commission of inquiry that he had "remonstrated with the warden as to the harshness of the discipline, but without any effect. The warden treated [my] remonstrances with indifference, if not contempt. He would say sneeringly, 'the Convicts humbugged [you]'".

The Reverend Rogers, a zealous Christian missionary of frail physique and gaunt, compassionate features,



Queen's University Archives

Horses and carts were still used to haul the quarried rock when this picture was taken early in this century.

possessed a burning hatred for Roman Catholicism. He brought anti-Catholic books and tracts into the jail with such inflammatory titles as *No Peace with Rome* and *Modern Popery Unmasked*. Whether Rogers ever knew it or not, two convicts were flogged for having such material in their possession. At the same time as Rogers was distributing anti-papal material, he was complaining about Catholic literature in the prison. Frank Smith, the infamous kitchen steward, liked to address Catholic convicts as "you damned papist buggers". It was hard to be a Catholic in early Ontario whether inside or outside the prison. No doubt James Hennessy, by the Irishness of his name, was wrongly accused of popery from time to time.

The issue on which the warden's repressive lackeys as well as the chaplains and even the Commission of Inquiry agreed was on the evils of tobacco and strong drink. Tobacco was sought after by the inmates with the same determination as drugs are nowadays. With all the comings and goings of contractors and tradesmen during the intense building phase, there were many potential couriers. Convicts stole anything and everything that was portable and that could be traded for plug tobacco — the type that could be easily concealed in their mouths. There must have been some connivance of guards and keepers in this illicit business.

Searching for tobacco was a favourite sport of Frank Smith, the warden's son. He liked to pull aside a suspect, make him open his mouth and endure a sadistic reaction if he found no tobacco. He would often pitch salt or potatoes into a convict's mouth before letting him go. If it was someone he strongly disliked, Smith would spit into the convict's open mouth. Of course, when tobacco was found, Smith ordered punishment for the next day.

There was no logic nor consistency in the imposition of tobacco punishments. In 1844, having tobacco was punishable with 12 strokes of the Cats. James Hennessy was put in the Box for the same offence in 1847. Another convict was put in the dark cell with bread and water for 48 hours in 1847 for having eight plugs of tobacco and refusing to say where he got them. Still another was put in the Box when he refused Frank Smith's order to open his mouth.

It is impossible to tell from the Report of the Commission how much liquor was consumed inside the prison or how it got there. At a time when alcoholic drink was cheap and uncontrolled, it would not be surprising if the prison population got a share. There is a record of a stableman named White who was flogged for being "horridly" drunk one evening. Did his fellow stableman, James Hennessy whose downfall was strong drink, imbibe from White's bottle? Convict Daly was flogged for refusing to say where he got liquor and for saying that the Warden's wife gave him brandy.

During the crescendo of cruelty near the end of James Hennessy's stay in the prison, there were nights of horror, worse than the days because of the mental exaggerations in the darkness. There were four French Canadian boys in the jail, three of whom were broth-

George Brown: A feud begins.

John A. Macdonald: Raking the ashes.

ers. The boy Alexis Lafleur was punished 187 times over seven years. He received 12 strokes of the rawhide for speaking French, the same for singing and the box treatment for talking. The longer he was in prison the worse his behaviour became and, therefore, the more severe the punishments. Of the three Beauché brothers, the sickening catalogue of vengeful punishment was much like Lafleur's. One of them went quite mad. Here is the testimony of ex-Guard Robinson before the Commission:

> Recollects a convict boy, named Beauché; he was a very small boy, from 12 to 14 years of age; he was often punished very severely with the cats. His usual offence was making a noise in his cell. Recollects one night, about two years ago, . . . the prison was disturbed by this boy. He awoke in great fright, and commenced shouting out that there was something under his bed, and calling for the Priest to come and see him. He climbed up on the rails of his window and door, screaming at the height of his lungs; blood and froth came from his mouth. Keeper Hooper went to the Warden, and called him out of his bed; it was near midnight. When the Warden arrived, the boy was still screaming. The Warden immediately said "open the door, till I bring this soundrel out". Hopper . . . brought out Beauché who was quite naked: the boy was laid on his back, and they tried to put a gag in his mouth but did not succeed. The boy then told the Warden . . . that he would be quiet and he was put back into his cell. . . . . The moment the boy was put back he became as bad as ever, crying out that something was under his bed. The Warden then ordered him to be taken out of his cell again; Hooper and witness held him down on the ground, and the Warden flogged him with a rope end as long as he could stand over him. The boy was very severely cut; the stripes broke his skin. Witness's shirt received so much blood from contact with the boy, that he had to change next morning. The boy never left the cell afterwards, witness thinks, until he was declared insane, and sent to the Lower Canada Lunatic Asylum in the custody of the witness.

In the women's section of the prison there was an unfortunate person named Charlotte Reveille who suffered from a variety of maladies which, combined with the horrors of the prison, drove her insane. Because of wood construction in that section, the area was overrun with bugs in the 1840s. Until Reveille was transferred to an asylum, her cries and threats rent the night air.

A black convict, James Brown, was driven mad and suicidal by the prison regime. His defiance was so fearless and his punishment so severe that reading the record is very dispiriting. Over the four years, August

Kingston Penitentiary Museum

A reproduction of "The Box". Warden Smith introduced this device into Kingston penitentiary in the 1840s.

1843 to August 1847, he received 660 lashes with the Cats and an assortment of other penalities. Still he raged and cursed against his tormentors, sometimes for hours in the middle of the night.

Along with the horrors, there were happy times for James Hennessy and the others. There were firm and sustaining friendships, restful nights, adequate meals and suitable clothing. As is still the case, life in prison was better for some convicts than life had been outside.

It would be wrong to believe that the children of James Hennessy banished their father from their thoughts while he endured the jail in Kingston. No doubt he was the subject of their hopes and prayers every day. In October 1845, assisted by someone skilled in political formalities, the family petitioned Charles Metcalfe, Governor General of British North America, to release James from prison. After the opening niceties, the petition went as follows:

> That previous to the offence of which the said James Hennesey was convicted he had always borne a good character and since his confinement in the Penitentiary your Petitioners have been informed his demeanour has been such as to gain the approbation of the authorities in charge of the institution.
>
> That at the time of his committal he left a large family nine in number most of whom were altogether depending on him for support and who have since suffered privations from his absence.
>
> That your Petitioners believing that the Punishment which he has already suffered will be amply sufficient to prevent his ever again from any cause being guilty of an infringement of the laws and fearing lest at his advanced age he having attained his fifty second year his life may fall a victim to any further confinement and anxious that he may be restored to them to spend the evening of his days amongst them and fully trusting in that clemency and mercy which have ever marked your Excellency's Rule and that of our Gracious Queen, humbly pray your Excellency to be graciously pleased to remit to the said James Hennesey the remainder of the Term for which he is imprisoned as aforesaid. And as in duty bound will every pray
>
> Timothy Henesey
> James Royal Henesy
> Sarrah Henesy
> Haner Henesy
> Mary Ann Henesy
> Oliv Henesy

Supporting the petition was a statement recommending "the Prayer of the within Petition to the favourable consideration of his Excellency" and certifying that "the Petitioners are from our intimate knowledge of them well worthy the most favourable regard of his Excellency". The statement was signed by John Grier, Rector of St. Thomas Church in Belleville, John B. Way, Robert C. Willing, Chas. Biggar, Philip George Bartlet, Incumbent (Clerk?) of Ameliasburg and Murray, Reuben Young, George Cunningham and John P. Roblin.

Also, the warden, Henry Smith, wrote to James Hopkirk in the office of the Provincial Secretary that the "conduct of James Hennessy during the time he has been in confinement in the Penitentiary has been very good."

In late November 1845, Hopkirk wrote to the Governor General that Hennessy had been a good prisoner but that he should not be released *yet*. Probably after 18 more months, when James had served half of his ten year sentence, it might be expedient to liberate him, wrote Hopkirk. Thereafter, in early December, the secretary of the Governor General wrote to the Reverend John Grier that he did not feel he would be justified "at present" in the interfering with the due course of law. Had the Hennessys known of Hopkirk's private memorandum, they might have petitioned suc-

cessfully for their father's release in 1847. Alas, they did not know and nobody nudged them.

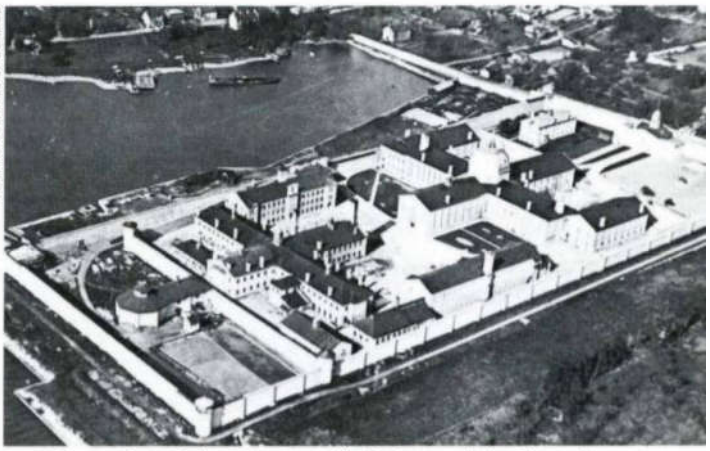
If James had been released in 1847, he would have missed the satisfaction, even the distinction, of the long investigation into the affairs of the Provincial Penitentiary the following year and from which most of the above details of prison life were drawn. The commission became a symbol of partisan strife and bitterness. According to some witnesses, it all started because the editor of the Kingston *Chronicle and News*, Samuel Rowlands, was angered when Warden Smith favoured the other papers, the *Whig* and the *Argus*, with advertisements. Keeper Sam Pollard, a staunch supporter of the warden, claimed that Rowlands was prompted by the prison surgeon, James Sampson, to publish "most scandalous charges and wicked lies" against the Board of Inspectors and the warden. Pollard said that when he confronted the editor, Rowlands replied that he intended to drive the warden out of the Penitentiary. Thereafter, the *Chronicle and News* printed stories of bad management and fraud out of which came the government's decision to set up a Commission of Inquiry.

The Reform government, now located in Montreal, and headed by Robert Baldwin and Governor General Lord Elgin, did not like Warden Smith nor his friends and associates, among whom were Henry Smith Jr., MPP for Frontenac and John A. Macdonald, MPP for Kingston. The Secretary of the Commission, its guiding genius and the chief author of its report was George Brown, editor of the Toronto *Globe* and a stern puritanical reformer. John Macdonald, the morally relaxed and pragmatic Tory, was offended by Brown's crusading zeal and by the fact of a Toronto Grit coming to his Kingston bailiwick to clean house.

The warden was accused by the commission of neglect of duty, incapacity, mismanagement, cruelty, falsehood and peculation. He was suspended from his job by the government and replaced in 1849 by Warden D.E. MacDonell.

Among the long list of charges against the warden was one that brought James Hennessy before the commission. The warden was accused of keeping over 150 head of poultry at public expense. James testified that he fed the hens from government stores. The commission found the warden guilty of keeping one convict engaged nearly full time in looking after the warden's cow, hogs and poultry. That convict, by all the evidence, was James Hennessy.

James testified to the immense amount of fodder he fed to the warden's cow and pigs. He said that he fed the cow three bushels of potatoes or turnips over seven days and a third of a bushel of oats every day and that the feed came from the same place as that for the prison livestock. James and his fellow convicts must


National Archives of Canada

An early air photo of the penitentiary. The harbour and the village of Cataraqui lie beyond.

have reflected every day how much better the livestock fared than they did.

Did the Hennessy family benefit from the fact that James gave evidence against the warden? Some thought so. Soon after the commission finished gathering evidence against the warden, the Hennessy family petitioned again for the release of their father and in a much more confident tone. The petition of 1 February, 1849, said in part:

> That since his imprisonment he has conducted himself in such a way as to gain the confidence of the authorities in whose charge he has been placed.
>
> That your Petitioners trust that your Excellency will favourably regard the prayer of this petition and remit the remaining term of the imprisonment of James Henesey and order him to be discharged.
>
> And as in duty bound
>
> Your petitioners will ever pray
>
> Timothy Henesey
> James Royal Henesy
> Sarah Henesy (Royal's wife)
> Haner Henesy (Cole)
> Mary Ann Henesy (Nix)
> Elizabeth Henisy (DeLong)
> Cathrine Henesy (Timothy's wife)
> Nancy Jane Henesy
> Olive Henesy

Again, there was a supporting statement signed by Robert C. Willing, Chas. Biggar, B. Weller, P.G. Bartlett, Clerk, Reuben Young, John P. Roblin, George Cunningham, Wm. Fitzgibbon and Marshall B. Roblin.

The second petition was handled by the Provincial Secretary, James Leslie, at Montreal, by this time the capital of the United Province of Canada. Leslie quickly got an updated report on the conduct of James from the new warden, MacDonell. The warden simply sent the punishment record of James Hennessy to Leslie

without further comment. On 16 March, James Leslie mailed the command of His Excellency to set James Hennessy at liberty. Three days later, 19 March 1849, the warden released James. One could wish that the mail service were as good and the officials as speedy in our own day.

While Henry Smith was being pulverized by George Brown, John Macdonald, the lawyer and MPP for Kingston, and his sick wife, Isabella, were mourning the death of their infant son, John A. Jr. They had just moved into a pretentious big house, Bellevue, on a rise overlooking the lake less than halfway between the penitentiary and Kingston. Macdonald had hoped that the splendid house would help Isabella recover her health and that his own fortunes would flourish. Not only did he lose his son at Bellevue, Isabella did not improve and he also suffered financially from bad times in the country. Adding insult to injury, was the self righteous assault by George Brown on the Smith family, his friends. Macdonald vowed to put things right.

In the Legislature of United Canada (Ontario and Quebec), Macdonald tried without success in 1849 to launch an inquiry into what he saw as the biased conduct of the Penitentiary Commission. He had to bide his time until 1854 when as part of the Liberal-Conservative coalition, Macdonald commanded enough votes in the legislature to take action on behalf of ex-Warden Smith. Smith's son, Henry Smith Jr., was Solicitor-General at the time.

Near midnight on 26 February 1856, Attorney-General Macdonald joined a wearying debate in the Assembly with a general attack on George Brown who was in his seat across the aisle. Then much to the delight of Henry Smith Jr., Macdonald shifted to a specific set of accusations related to the penitentiary inquiry of eight years before. He charged that the Commission and George Brown in particular had intimidated the aged and worthy warden, suborned convicted criminals as witnesses, falsified and concealed evidence, and bribed convicts with the promise of a pardon. James Hennessy was one of the three convicts in Macdonald's over-heated mind.

A legislative committee to examine the charges was set up. The ashes of the 1848-49 inquiry were raked over, including the successful petition of the Hennessy family for the release of James. None of Macdonald's charges were supported by the committee. Of the six convicts who testified before the commission in 1848, only two were pardoned and only one, James Hennessy, within a year of the commission's work. As documented above, James might have been pardoned in 1847 if his family had petitioned for it.

That was the end of Macdonald's efforts to help Warden Smith through political machinations. But the Macdonald-Brown feud continued for eight more years on a scale unmatched in Canadian politics since, with the possible exception of the Pearson-Diefenbaker feud of the 1960s. Then, suddenly, George Brown joined forces with John A. Macdonald to work for a federation of all the Canadian provinces. As a result, in 1867, the United Province of Canada were transformed into the Dominion of Canada which by 1871 stretched from sea to sea.

Postscript:

This excerpt from the history of the Kingston Penitentiary raises many important questions. Here is just one of them: Why have our prisons failed to rehabilitate criminals? Why, in other words, have they not been a benefit to society, but only a shame and an embarrassment? Here is George Brown's answer written 140 years ago:

> And when it is considered that a large proportion of the inmates of the prisons are the victims of circumstances; that many are condemned for the first act of crime, and many more for the act of a moment of passion or interference; and that the great majority of prisoners have been born and reared in ignorance of everything but vice — how strong is the claim on a Christian people to see well that their prisons shall not become the moral tomb of those who enter them, but rather schools where the ignorant are enlightened and the repentant strengthened. . . . We have but one penal institution of which the aim is reformation, and the little success which has as yet attended its operations, it has been our painful duty to disclose.

George Brown, himself a murder victim, would rest easier in his grave if we could report success for our prison system nearly a century and a half later. ◆

Peter Hennessy is Professor Emeritus, Queen's University, Kingston.

Canadian Culture In Peril, 1949–1961

By J.M. Bumsted

Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant: No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.

— Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Washington, 1969.

The major arena of Canadian concern about the United States in the 1950s was not military or economic, but cultural. At the same time that the Americans had taken an international lead in economic and military terms, they were also becoming increasingly dominant in cultural matters as well.

The secret of American power was an extraordinarily prosperous home economy, based partly upon the extension of technological innovation in the form of new consumer goods that found their way into nearly every American household. Many of these new consumer goods, such as television receivers and stereo receivers, were not merely technology that was culturally neutral. They required the development of a related cultural product — television programmes, phonograph records — to make the new gadgets essential to every family, and the American entertainment industry was up to the challenge. While Canadians had always been susceptible to American culture in the form of printed works, film and radio, they were now being overwhelmed with new technologies which some Canadians felt might have more pervasive influence. To a considerable extent, the readiness of Canadians to accept the new technological innovations and the American culture that they usually purveyed was a product of positive attraction. As Melinda McCracken has pointed out in an autobiographical account of teenage life in Winnipeg in the 1950s, "everything American was so desirable. America appeared to be the source of all good things, things that were magical and ingenious and fun."

While teenagers may have been attracted to the American entertainment magnet increasingly directed at them, Canada's elite was considerably less enthusiastic. An understandable worry was that the influx of American culture might overwhelm the distinctive Canadian identity which was the cultural concern of most Canadian nationalists. The Canadian government shared the anxieties of the elite, and three royal commissions between 1949 and 1961 directly addressed the problem of American culture in Canada. Their diagnoses of the problem and prescriptions for dealing with it are illustrative of both its complexities and the difficulties Canadians experienced in coming to terms with it. Culture has always been a slippery term, and Canadians during the 1950s had particular trouble with it. They had difficulty in distinguishing between culture as a humanistic activity or enterprise and as an anthropological or social totality, although it obviously makes quite a difference where one searches for "Canadian culture". They had equal difficulty in distinguishing cultural categories, although there was a clear tendency among Canadian intellectuals of the decade to prefer high or "serious" culture to popular or "mass" culture.

Popular culture was thought to be either degraded or inferior and often disdained as inconsequential and irrelevant. Even Harold Innis, whose 1951 book *The Bias of Communication* was a pioneering effort to explore the relationship between technology and culture, saw the new communications technology as accentuating mainly "the importance of the ephemeral and of the superficial. In the cinema and the broadcast it became necessary to search for entertainment and amusement." Quoting U.S. writer Ilka Chase with obvious relish, Innis added, "Radio . . . has done more than its share to debase our intellectual standards." In his influential book *The Canadian Identity*, written at the close of the decade, historian W. L. Morton observed that it did not

> greatly matter that Americans and Canadians share the same popular culture; after reading the same comic strips, and the same periodicals, Canadians remain as distinct as they ever were. What differ-

Canada's intellectuals deplored the fact that many Canadians were in thrall to "Oxydol's Own Ma Perkins" during the 1940s and 1950s. A serious-minded CBC would change all that, it was thought. Above, members of the "Ma Perkins" cast at the mike.

entiates the two people are things far deeper than the mass culture of North America which both countries share and both created.

From Morton's perspective, a concentration upon popular culture as significant would have been un-Canadian. Popular culture was American, and one sought the Canadian identity in other places. This attitude was generally shared by those in government and in the universities. Secondly, Morton, like Harold Innis and countless other members of the Canadian elite, was outdated in his understanding of current technology, much less its possible impact. A sense of being substantially behind the times strikes any reader of the reports of the royal commissions on culture in the 1950s.

The first royal commission to confront the question of American culture was the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, which was appointed in 1949 and reported in 1951. This commission has always been known as the "Massey Commission," after its chairman Vincent Massey, subsequently Governor-General of Canada. The Massey Commission was instructed to examine "certain Federal agencies and activities, . . . with a view to recommending their most effective conduct in the national interest and with full respect for the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces." The agencies were all concerned with cultural matters, broadly conceived. Chief among the commission's concerns was to be "the principles upon which the policy of Canada should be based, in the fields of radio and television broadcasting," taking it straight into the tangled world of mass communication and popular culture. As Maria Tippitt has recently demonstrated in her book *Making Culture*, the Massey Commission has received undue credit for its role in improving Canadian culture, chiefly because Canadians have failed to appreciate how much was happening in the nation at the community and amateur level. But if the Massey Commission was less influential than has been assumed, there can be no question of its cultural orientation.

The Massey Commission's final report virtually started with the American Fact:

> Canadians, with their customary optimism, may think that the fate of their civilization is in their own hands. So it is. But this young nation, struggling to be itself, must shape its course with an eye to three conditions so familiar that their significance can too easily be ignored. Canada has a small and scattered population in a vast area; this population is clustered along the rim of another country many times more populous and of far greater economic strength; a majority of Canadians share their mother tongue with that neighbour, which leads to pecul-

iarly close and intimate relations. One or two of these conditions will be found in many modern countries. But Canada alone possesses all three.

The report continued with a detailed discussion of "American influence in our cultural life". American imports could "harm as well as help us" and "the price may be excessive," argued the Commission. Much of what was crossing the border was meritricious at best and "positively harmful" at worst. Particularly instanced were soap operas, pulp magazines, and "certain children's [radio] programmes of the 'crime' and 'horror' type." The commission concluded:

> It cannot be denied, . . . that a vast and disproportionate amount of material coming from a single alien source may stifle rather than stimulate our own creative effort; and passively accepted without any standard of comparison, this may weaken critical faculties. We are now spending millions to maintain a national independence which would be nothing but an empty shell without a vigorous and distinctive cultural life. We have seen that we have its elements in our traditions and in our history; we have made important progress, often aided by American generosity. We must not be blind, however, to the very present danger of permanent dependence.

From the outset, therefore, the Massey Commission's position was a subtle blend of high Tory Canadian nationalism and anti-Americanism.

The blend was continued in the Commission's analysis of the principal item in its mandate: broadcasting. In its rehearsal of the history of Canadian broadcasting, for example, it recalled that many Canadians in the 1920s "began to fear that cultural annexation would follow our absorption into the American radio system just as surely as economic and even political annexation would have followed absorption into the American railway system fifty years earlier." The result was the Canadian Broadcasting Act of 1936 which established the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a national service. The system, the Commission reported, "has so far met with tolerable success in combating commercialization and excessive Americanization of Canadian programmes." These two tendencies were obviously regarded by the Commission as virtually synonymous. The major criticism of the CBC, which operated at the time only on radio, was that it needed to "explore more fully Canadian capacity and taste in purely intellectual matters." There was no justification for the "more than generous provision of soap operas," for example, which the Commission used as the symbols of meretricious popular programming that induced "false values and unreal emotionalism." But on the whole, the national broadcasting system created in 1936 had done its job, particularly in "the successful resistance to the absorption of Canada into the general cultural pattern of the United States."

The Commission then turned to television. Canada had no television service whatsoever at the time of the Massey Commission's enquiries, and recommendations in this area were clearly some of the most urgent parts of its mandate. The Commission did not consult much with popular opinion on television programming, since few Canadians had much access to TV. Instead, its members had themselves sampled American pro-

National Archives of Canada/Karsh portrait

Vincent Massey (above, as Governor-General) hoped to raise the tone of Canadian cultural life. Unwholesome American influences would be discouraged.

The Culturality Squad

We've commissioned a lot
From Alexander Brott,
And we gave Davy Dunton his start.
We're the chaps who pour the tea
At the National Gallery,
And we peddle chunks of Eskimo art.
Canadiana, Canadiana,
Mensana incorpore sana,
Though other nations are top banana,
We still say, Canadiana . . .

My Fur Lady,
McGill Revue, 1957

gramming, which they concluded would not, with some exceptions, "serve our national needs". American television was "essentially a commercial enterprise, an advertising industry," in which sponsors frequently chose "programmes of inferior cultural standards, thinking to attract the greatest number of viewers." Television commercials "intensify the methods of appeal to material instincts of various kinds, methods which now disfigure many radio commercials." Perhaps significantly, the only individual opinion cited in the chapter on television was that of T.S. Eliot, that well-known authority on small children, who in a letter to *The Times* (printed in full in a footnote) had expressed concern about the impact of television on toddlers.

Enough has now been said to give some idea of the general position on culture of the influential Massey Commission, one of unabashedly Tory elitism. Insofar as it distinguished between "serious" and "popular" culture, it dismissed the latter, often by associating it with commercialism, which was in turn associated with American culture. As far as possible, the Commission built its agenda for federal involvement in the arts, letters and sciences in Canada apart from popular culture, insisting that the priority was "to enrich and to quicken" the cultural and intellectual life of Canadians. It did note the lack of protection for Canadian periodicals ("our closest approximation to a national literature"), but also insisted that newspapers and magazines were outside its mandate. The principal weapon in its arsenal was public subsidy, the expenditure of money on matters of importance, such as art and scholarship, and its most lasting achievement was the ultimate creation of the Canada Council. The one area of popular culture which the Commission could not avoid was broadcasting, and it took a predictable course, denying that broadcasting was an industry and insisting that it was "a public service directed and controlled in the public interest by a body responsible to Parliament." It therefore recommended the continuation of the existing national broadcasting system and its extension to television. Moreover, it recommended that the CBC's Board of Governors "refuse all commercial programmes not acceptable in content and that they consider the possibility of eliminating some of the less desirable commercial programmes now carried, and of replacing them by programmes more appropriate to Canadian listeners." It also sought more programming "in all fields of intellectual interest," in French, and in terms of utilization of Canadian talent. The Commission unabashedly sought to improve Canadian public taste and to wean it from an "enervating amusement" it plainly associated with the United States. Its final recommendation on television broadcasting was that another investigation be held within three years of the beginning of regular television broadcasting.

Canada's first two television stations were opened in September of 1952; there were 146,000 television receivers in the country at the time. By December of 1954 there were nine stations and 1,200,000 sets; in June of 1955 twenty-six stations and 1,400,000 sets were in operation, and by December of 1957 there were forty-four stations and nearly three million sets. The rate of expansion was almost twice that of the United States, and the market for new receivers had been saturated within five years. As the Massey Commission had recommended, another royal commission was appointed by Order in Council in 1955 to examine Canadian broadcasting, chaired by Arthur Fowler of Montreal and submitting its report in 1957.

Arthur Fowler was an accountant, his fellow commissioners also businessmen rather than the academics and arts patrons of the Massey Commission, and the terms of reference of the Commission emphasized financial matters far more than cultural ones. Fowler began his report by admitting the Commission had hoped to be brief, since its principal concern would be with "problems of business administration and finance." In the course of its investigations, however, the Commission discovered that there were major unresolved issues of broadcasting, and, as it put it, "to suggest the financing of an enterprise, you have to know what you are trying to buy." It thus produced a lengthy and complex report, and in its introductory chapter attempted to explain why. Broadcasting, insisted the Commission, was already enormously influential and its influence would only increase; radio and television were potentially agents for much good, enriching the lives of Canadians. But they were also forces for evil, dulling "the sensibilities by endless repetition of the commonplace and the tawdry," acting as "dehumanizing forces, tending to make all men conform in thought, action and aspiration to the lowest common denominator of their kind."

To their surprise, the Fowler commissioners found themselves buying into the same concerns as their predecessors, particularly the threat to the Canadian "national identity" from the United States:

> Can we resist the tidal wave of American cultural activity? Can we retain a Canadian identity, art and culture — a Canadian nationhood? . . . Assuming, as we must, that their broadcasting system is satisfactory and suitable for Americans, this is no basis for thinking it is desirable for Canadians. We may want, and may be better to have, a different system — something distinctively Canadian and not a copy of a system that may be good for Americans but may not be the best for us.

Like the Massey Commission, the Fowler Commission turned to Canadian history, pointing out the many

"steps taken to make Canada a nation despite the forces of geography and the powerful attraction and influence of the United States." The same actions would be required in broadcasting, at great expense. "No politician in his sane mind could want to encounter the difficulties and criticisms and headaches of supervising a public broadcasting system if he could possibly avoid it," argued Fowler. "The fact is," the report continued, "that for Canada there is no choice." The alternatives were a system "predominantly dependent on imported American radio and television programmes," or a system "with some flow of programmes east and west across Canada, with some Canadian content and the development of a Canadian sense of identity."

What the Fowler Commission had quickly discovered was that radio and television had been altered out of all recognition between 1950 and 1956, particularly in terms of programming. It had commissioned a Canadian-born academic resident in the United States, Dr. Dallas Smythe, to supervise a detailed content analysis of Canadian radio and television programming based on 1956 transmissions, which was printed as a lengthy appendix to the Commission's final report. What Smythe's team discovered was that 48.5 percent of total programme output on all Canadian TV stations was produced in Canada, 47.9 percent in the United States, and only 3.6 percent in other countries. There were clear differences between English and French stations, with English stations drawing 53.1 percent of programming from the U.S. and French stations only 8.4 percent (while producing 80.5 percent of their programmes at home). Within these gross figures were to be found other important differentials. Thus within the broad category of "Entertainment-type Programme," Canadians produced nearly all of their programming on fine arts, dance, "serious" music, more than half of "serious" drama, all the "serious" children's programmes, and most sports. These were the programmes of which the CBC boasted and which won many international awards. But figures for other "Entertainment" programming, particularly in prime time, were not quite so rosy:

	Canada	U.S.	Other
Domestic Drama	**22.5**	**67.6**	**9.9**
Comedy	**9.7**	**84.5**	**5.8**
Crime, western	**1.4**	**94.7**	**3.9**
Romantic	**2.9**	**69.6**	**27.5**
Musical Comedy	**28.2**	**71.8**	**——**
Total Children's	**17.8**	**79.9**	**2.3**
Other	**1.7**	**62.5**	**35.8**

Hollywood was the prime supplier of most of the American programmes, which were on film and could be sold to Canadian stations at a fraction of the cost of local production of comparable quality.

CBC television offered high culture to Canadian viewers whenever it could. Here Lorne Greene faces the CBC camera in a 1950s Stratford Festival production of "Othello".

The Smythe data dealt only with what was transmitted in Canada, not what people watched. In 1960, ratings surveys would indicate that in the major Toronto market, 68 percent of viewing was devoted to watching American television stations and another 11 percent to watching American programmes on Canadian stations; in other words, nearly 80 percent of total Toronto viewing was of American productions. Nor was Toronto, with its close proximity to the American border, unique in its penchant for American programmes. In Edmonton, which received only Canadian stations, 66 percent of total viewing time was spent watching American programmes. Even in Montreal, with French-language stations and a supposed language barrier, American stations consistently outdrew Canadian ones in the ratings.

Professor Smythe found similar patterns of national origin on radio, which in response to television had moved out of "drama programmes" into music and news. By 1956, news programming represented 10.8 percent of air time on Canadian radio, and music another 56.5 percent; the largest music category was "Popular and Dance" at 39.6 percent of total programme time. As usual, these totals disguised substantial internal variations. The CBC Trans-Canada

CBC

Canadian "eggheads" tuned in to the CBC radio panel show "Now I Ask You" during the 1950s. Heavyweight panelists included, left to right: "Maclean's" editor Ralph Allen, culture commentator James Bannerman, producer Jim Kent, journalist J.B. McGeachy, announcer Frank Herbert, musician Dr. Boyd Neel and novelist Morley Callaghan.

English network (the "serious" one) carried 40.8 percent music, with only 8.4 percent of it Popular, while the CBC Dominion English network (the one with the substantially higher ratings) carried 72.8 percent music, of which 50.7 percent was Popular. Private unaffiliated English stations broadcast 61.9 percent music (with only 0.6 percent serious and 57.2 Popular and Western). CBC French carried 19.5 percent Popular, while the figure was 53.5 percent for private French unaffiliated stations. Most of the popular and dance music came from recordings (98.8 percent in the case of English unaffiliated and 98.9 percent for French unaffiliated). Smythe's sources, which for radio consisted entirely of inadequately-maintained programme logs required by law of the stations, made it impossible to make sophisticated breakdowns of "the country of origin of recorded music broadcast by the sound radio stations." But everyone in Canada knowledgeable about the popular music business knew that recorded popular and dance music was almost entirely American in origin.

What did the Fowler Commission make of this data? In order to understand its conclusions, it is important to remember that it had no conception of targeting audiences or maximizing them, but instead insisted that programming needed to be balanced. In part this concern reflected the fact that a large number of Canadians in rural and remote regions had access only to one radio or television station, usually CBC, in part a refusal to accept a ratings-driven system, despite its willingness to take private broadcasting seriously. It insisted that "a broadcaster who provides his audience with nothing but XVIth century music and Ibsenish dramas is no better than the broadcaster who never moves out of tin-pan alley and the cops-and-robbers theatre." It was thus astounded that broadcasters often duplicated one another at certain times of the broadcast day in terms of their programme fare. But of course its principal concern was with the absence of substantial Canadian productions in nearly all the most popular categories, even on the CBC, which clearly tried harder to fulfill national objectives. The problem,

said the Commission, was not that American programming was bad, for most of it was extremely well-produced and attractive. But "what may be a 'good' programme for a viewer in the United States is not necessarily a 'good' programme for a Canadian viewer, if a separate Canadian consciousness and sense of identity is a desirable national objective." The Commission clung desperately to the notion that the Canadian audience would prefer what it euphemistically called "fresh entertainment and experiences" if only they were made available. As businessmen, the commissioners understood that Canada could not fund a competition with American popular culture, and so they insisted instead that what was necessary was a broadcasting service that "should embrace the whole way of life of the Canadian people, and should offer something for everyone in the country."

What was the Fowler solution? Essentially, it was regulated competition between public and private broadcasters on both radio and television, through the institution of a new Board of Broadcast Governors charged with "determining overall broadcasting policies for Canada" in terms of a continued goal of preserving the Canadian identity. The Commission recognized the shortage of funds for programme production, but recommended against the reinstitution of a license fee for television receivers to help finance CBC programming. The principal results of its recommendations, translated into the Broadcasting Act of 1958, were twofold. First, the legitimization of a new round of licensing of private television and radio stations across Canada which would become notorious for their reliance on commercial sponsorship, imported programming, and audience ratings. Secondly, the introduction by the BBG of "Canadian content" regulations for television, effective 1 April 1961. Neither of these results had been directly recommended by the Commission, of course. The definition of Canadian content was so broad as to be meaningless, and it hardly restricted foreign (chiefly American) imports, particularly at prime time. Radio would have to wait until the early 1970s for Canadian content guidelines.

The final royal commission of the fifties era dealing with culture was the Royal Commission on Publications, appointed in 1960 and reporting in 1961. The problem of periodical publications had been discussed but not addressed by the Massey Commission. This new commission, headed by journalist Grattan O'Leary of Ottawa, was charged with examining the twin question of "inequitable competition from foreign periodicals" and "the further development of a Canadian identity through a genuinely Canadian periodical press." The Commission's report began with the usual factors of "Size and Geography," chiefly Canada's naked exposure to "the world's most penetrating and

Cultural "uplift" was provided on CBC radio in the 1950s by "Nocturne", which featured poetry readings by J. Frank Willis, with organ accompaniment by Quentin McLean.

effective apparatus for the transmission of ideas." It denied that American penetration was deliberate or that American culture was an alien, "monolithic, inferior way of life from which Canadians need shelter." Canada and the United States had "the same basic cultures," maintained the O'Leary Commission, but Canada had special problems — political, social and economic — that could not be addressed by "communications media owned or controlled in another country."

The report quickly plunged into economic details of circulation and advertising of Canadian periodicals, on the grounds that "it was the allegation of inequitable competition to which the Commission's special, but not exclusive, attention was directed." It pointed out that the circulation of Canadian magazines as a percentage of total magazine sales in the country declined from 28.8 percent in 1950 to 23.3 percent during the decade 1950-59, with commensurate declines in advertising revenues. It advanced a number of reasons for this trend. One was the sale of advertising space to American magazines, particularly those like *Time* and *Reader's Digest* that could produce Canadian editions at minimal cost as an extension of home editions. Another was the fact that nearly half of the magazines sold on Canadian newsstands were distributed in Canada by two American companies, who did not encourage small Canadian newcomers.

In its conclusion, the Commission returned to wider implications. It did not make the points that the situation in periodical publishing could have been paralleled in almost every aspect of popular/mass culture, or that one of the most convincing operative

examples was that of imperialism/colonialism. It did reject the phrase "Canadian culture" as meaningless, preferring instead "the Canadian experience" or "Canada's national identity". This terminology avoided some of the semantic confusion over the word "culture," making it clear that the Commission was concerned with culture in its widest anthropological sense, arguing that " 'the Canadian experience' is that group of attitudes, traditions, values, and processes of government and society, which make Canadians distinguishable from other peoples." At the same time, it begged the questions of whether there was or could be a distinctive national identity, or precisely where that identity could be found. In the end, the Commission argued that periodical publishing in Canada should be Canadian. Its recommendations first defined Canadian periodicals in a way that excluded so-called "Canadian" editions of foreign publications, and then attempted to establish equity for Canadian publishers with foreign competition through taxation policy and customs exclusions. It recommended that tax deductions for advertising intended for the Canadian market in foreign periodicals (as it defined them) be disallowed, and that periodicals published abroad with Canadian domestic advertising be stopped at the border under the Customs Act.

Despite the Commission's attempts to disassociate its recommendations from charges of virulent anti-Americanism or extreme Canadian nationalism, its report created a bit of a furor. The publishers of *Time* and *Reader's Digest* both privately threatened to cease publication in Canada were the recommendations implemented, and the Diefenbaker government in its proposed implementation of the report exempted these two journals on the grounds that they were already in operation in Canada and were decent corporate citizens. The government fell from power before it could implement even this limited policy, and it later became an issue in the mid-60s for the minority ministry of Lester B. Pearson, when Canadian cultural policy became caught in the complex negotiations over free trade in automobiles — and lost.

What conclusions can we draw from this account? In the first place, it ought to be clear that American culture had penetrated substantially into Canada by the 1950s, and through such media as television and the periodical press was biting increasingly deeply into Canadian life. In the second place, it ought to be equally clear that Canadian governments, if not the Canadian public generally, saw the cultural arena as an important one during the decade. In the third place, the problem of cultural imperialism was an extremely difficult one with which to come to grips.

The whole concept of culture was itself so complicated and nebulous — the O'Leary Commission referred to "muddled thinking and pseudo-intellectualism" — that it was difficult to determine either what was the problem or where it was most plainly manifested. The succession of royal commissions of the 50s shared in common a spirit of Canadian nationalism, but were not agreed on what culture meant or what aspects of it most needed defending. Shunning the term itself did little good, especially when what was put in its place were equally nebulous phrases such as "a separate and distinct cultural identity in Canada" or "Canada's national identity". From a perceptual perspective, the royal commissions were particularly weak at establishing the nature of the relationship between the mass media and culture, and then the connection between mass/popular culture and culture in the anthropological sense. Without some strong theoretical framework, the commissions could scarcely expect to confront the problem.

Finally, what the Canadian experience in the 50s strongly suggests is that it was much easier both conceptually and politically to deal with the elements of elite (or "serious" or "high") culture than with those of popular or mass culture. The Massey Commission's recommendations for increased federal involvement in the arts, particularly through the subsidy system of a Canada Council, worked reasonably well for the nation. A strong Canadian elite culture, building on traditions through heavy subsidization, did develop. How "distinctively Canadian" was and is that culture is another matter. But mass or popular culture has proved considerably more recalcitrant. Even when they directly addressed it, the royal commissions of the fifties shied away from a policy of thorough-going subsidization for mass culture — despite their measured support for the CBC — chiefly because of their twin perceptions of vulgar inconsequence and outrageous expense. Except for broadcasting and latterly magazine publication, the institutions of mass culture, including film, popular music, and sports such as hockey, proceeded without much public scrutiny during the decade. Whether giving them any attention would have made a difference is, of course, another question. ♦

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THE COMPANY DIVERSIFIES

Loggers at Moose Factory

By David R. Dyck

In the summer of 1809 the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company sent Alexander Christie to Moose Factory as "Surveyor of Woods." He was to see to the cutting and squaring of such "Timber Trees as may be adapted to the Trade of this Country." To assist him in this endeavour, Mr. Christie was authorized to engage four men from Aberdeen, near his own home town of Pettendrith and these men together with additional servants the Company would put at his disposal were to open up a new business venture. The Company was going into the timber business.

The timber business was one of a number of efforts the Company was making to broaden its source of income at a difficult time in the fur market. The Napoleonic wars were very inhibiting of trade between England and its traditional continental trading partners. Nowhere is this more forcefully stated than in a long letter to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury sent by the Company on 21 December 1808. In this letter the Company claimed severe financial distress because all the *good* furs of the last three years, normally sold on the European markets, were still in their warehouses. Normally, only beaver pelts and some few inferior furs were bought for use in Britain. Fine furs were bought by merchants from Europe for the fairs of Frankfurt and Leipzig, and for France. Since 1806 no furs had been sold for exportation because no buyers had come. Whether this was because of French or British governmental policies, the end result was the same. In their letter, the Company requested relief from duties on unsold goods and a loan, on the grounds that it supported British manufacturing, many British citizens, at home and abroad, and thousands of natives in Canada. The Treasury Commissioners granted only a one-year delay in payment of duties. In response to this the Governor and Committee resolved to embark on a series of belt tightening measures.

More hopefully than that, however, the governing Committee began to look for ways to expand business in other areas. In a letter to Thomas Thomas, Superintendent of the Southern District, the Committee asked for extensive detailed information about a vein of lead located at White River. The request included providing a careful description of the vein, its surrounding rock formations, the possibilities of road or navigation to the location, the "practicability of conveying the ore on a railway" together with samples of the ore. Further ideas included the making of potash for shipment to England, and the growing of hemp for rope making. There is no clear indication how far these ideas were pursued, but the lumber business was supported vigorously. Indeed in the year that Alexander Christie was first sent out, 1809, John Thomas, Chief at Moose Factory, was told that ". . . for the present . . . suspend in great measure the prosecution of it [the fur trade, except for beaver]", and that he was to give Christie every assistance in his power ". . . to enable him [Christie] to prosecute the very essential object we have in view [developing the timber trade] which we must for the present consider is the most important object of the Factory under your Command".

Just how serious the Company was about the timber business can be seen from the fact they offered Alexander Christie £500 for the period of about May 1809 to September 1810. This at a time when labourers were getting £20 per year from that same Company, and highly skilled employees were considered to be well paid at £30. They further gave Christie discretion in picking four men to work with him, at a maximum of £50 each, and instructed David Geddes, their agent in Stromness, to hire 10 extra Company servants who were capable of cutting, felling and squaring timber and send them to Moose Factory in case Christie might be able to make use of them.

There was, to be sure, a certain amount of lumbering going on before the arrival of Christie. This was mostly done when there was time, and when there was need. Most factories in the Southern District had a sawpit or two and timber was being sawed by some of the men throughout the winter. But the products were used for local buildings, constructing and repairing boats used in the trade, and occasionally sending some timber back to England, when the ships would otherwise not be full. So when Christie arrived at Moose in the

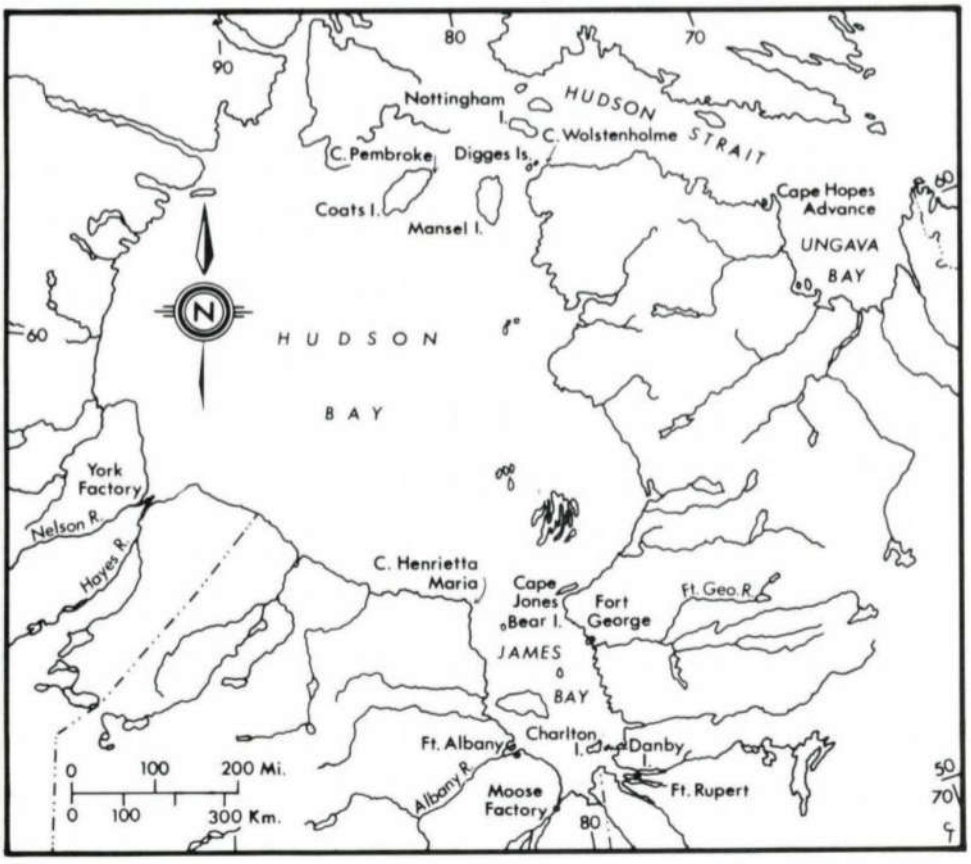
fall of 1809, he immediately made a quick survey of the surrounding woods, and sent a report together with timber samples, such as were available from the previous winter, back to London with the returning ship.

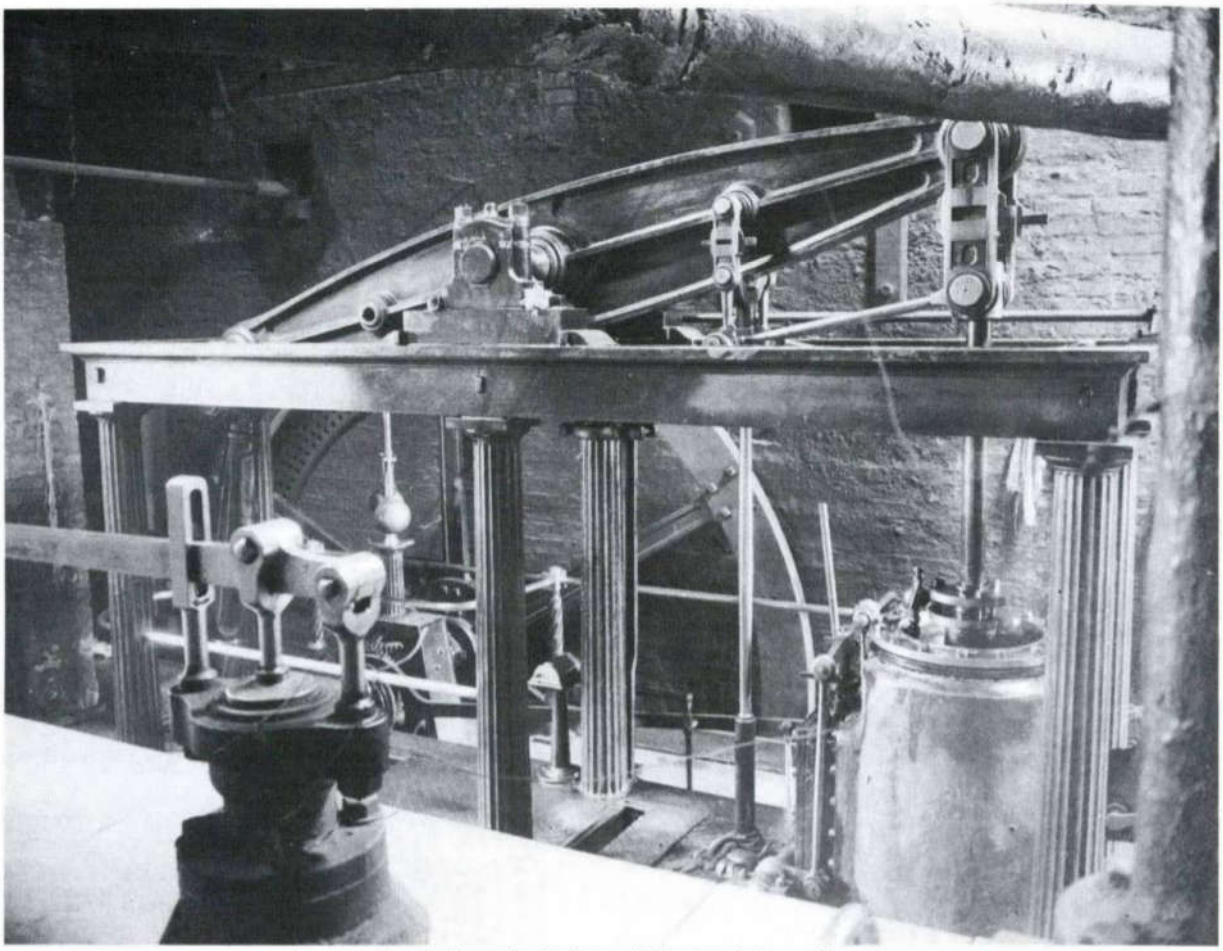
In this preliminary report Christie laid out the nature of the commitments necessary to expand the timber operation. Most immediately he needed two horses to haul logs to the river bank (they were sent out in the summer of 1810), but for greater expansion of business, Christie raised the possibility of building a sawmill powered by a steam engine. In the immediate period, however, he and the men who came for that purpose were busy cutting trees, squaring and sawing them into suitable timber for export to England.

Christie determined to return to England in the fall of 1810 for detailed discussions with the governing Committee about the future of the timber business. He felt comfortable about the work continuing in his absence because sufficient timber had been cut and squared so that the men could concentrate on pit-sawing in 1810-11, and because he left very detailed instructions with the Chief of Moose Factory, John Thomas, about the exact dimensions of the timber to be produced.

The timber was being prepared for sale in London in four categories: battens, deals, masts and spars. Battens, cut out of the best wood, were always 2¾ inches thick, and ranged from 16 to 20 feet long and 6 to 9 inches wide. Deals, which constituted the bulk of the timber shipments, could be from 2 to 3½ inches thick in half-inch increments, anywhere from 8 to 20 feet long, and from 8 to 11 inches wide. At one point the governing Committee requested a very restrictive range of deal sizes, at a time when the deals were being mostly sold to box manufacturers. Generally, however, that request seems to have been largely ignored. Spars and masts were governed by a complex formula, devised by His Majesty's Navy, relating thickness to length, and defining how and where on the individual spar or mast the measurements were to be made.

When Christie returned to London late in 1810, he met with the Committee to discuss the potential of the timber trade. In the course of these discussions it was understood that expansion was possible and desirable, and that Christie would return to his home and put his thoughts and proposals together and send them to the Committee. When he did so, on 19 February 1811, the Committee was so shocked by the proposal to send





George Watkins Collection, University of Bath

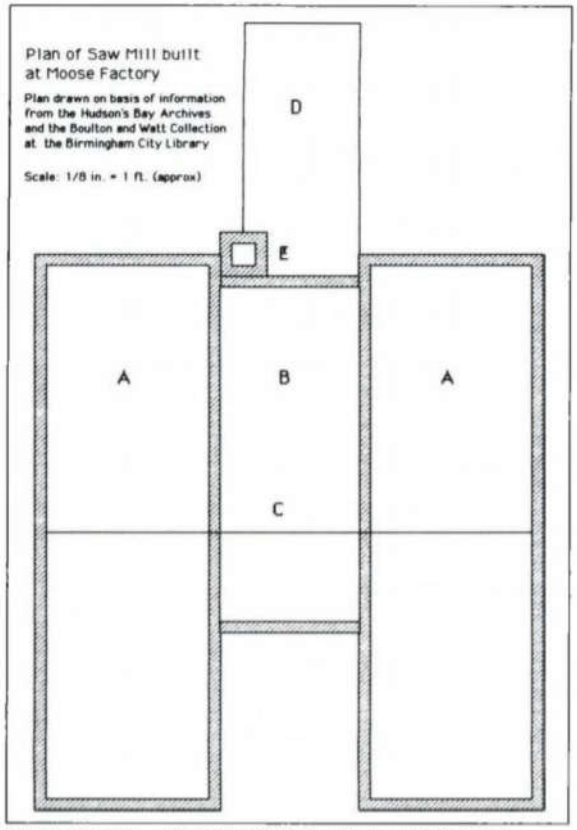
A steam engine similar to the Boulton and Watt installation at Moose Factory.

52 men to prepare as much as 468,000 feet of deals, that they seriously considered abandoning the business completely. Clearly, Christie had not hinted at such a large labour force in the earlier discussions. They requested that he come to London for further discussions, the end result of which was the Committee's decision to provide Christie with a sawmill and a steam engine to operate it, at or near Moose Factory. The decision is an interesting one. A case could be made that sending out men who could be brought back fairly quickly should hostilities cease, would have been a more sensible proposal than spending approximately £2,700 on equipment that would likely remain in Canada. Nonetheless, it is likely that the Committee was unwilling to build the buildings and provide the large establishment necessary to support the work force Christie envisioned.

The Committee having made its decision, it was then firmly committed to it for the secretary wrote to Christie on 27 March 1811, saying "The Committee expects you will immediately come to London if the proposal meets you approbation and if not you will please inform me by return of Post that the Committee may have time to look out for another person to superintend the Business". A month later implementation of the proposal was proceeding with specifications being forwarded to James Abernathy's foundry in Aberdeen, to begin the construction of sawmill equipment. The engine was to be ordered from Boulton and Watt's Soho Engine Works in Birmingham. By this time, James Watt, the originator of the separate condenser engine, had retired from the firm as had Matthew Boulton, but the Engine Works continued in the capable hands of M. R. Boulton and James Watt, Jr. Initially, the Company intended to order a 10 horse-

A Timber Glossary

Batten: Long, narrow piece of squared timber.
Deal: Piece of sawn fir or pine wood of standard size.


Plan of Saw Mill built at Moose Factory
Plan drawn on basis of information from the Hudson's Bay Archives and the Boulton and Watt Collection at the Birmingham City Library
Scale: 1/8 in. = 1 ft. (approx)
D
E
A
B
A
C

(A) Saw houses — 16 feet by 50 feet and about 46 feet high. (B) Engine house — "exactly" 12 feet wide by 32 feet long and about 48 feet high from bottom of flywheel. (C) Line of power transmission. (D) Boiler and firebox — 10 feet by 32 feet and about 14½ feet high. (E) Chimney — about 4½ feet square at the base and about 45 feet high.

power steam engine. Presumably, the discussions between Christie and Boulton and Watt caused an upward revision, since the engine shipped was, in fact, a 20 horsepower engine.

The ships going to Hudson Bay in the summer of 1811 carried, along with the usual supplies, Alexander Christie with a mandate to set up a station on Hayes Island up the Moose River from Moose Factory, a sawmill which had been prepared by James Abernathy and Sons, and letters to the Northern and Southern superintendents which authorized Christie to get supplies and men, up to 20, from other factories. Christie was expected to build his station and raise cattle and provisions, but he could draw on supplies from Moose when necessary. It was also decided to separate Christie's accounts from others and treat the lumber business as a separate operation. This was largely a result of the difficulty that the factor at Moose had in justifying the sad state of his accounts when, in truth, Christie was constantly drawing supplies from Moose and using their tradesmen, such as the blacksmiths, armourers and others.

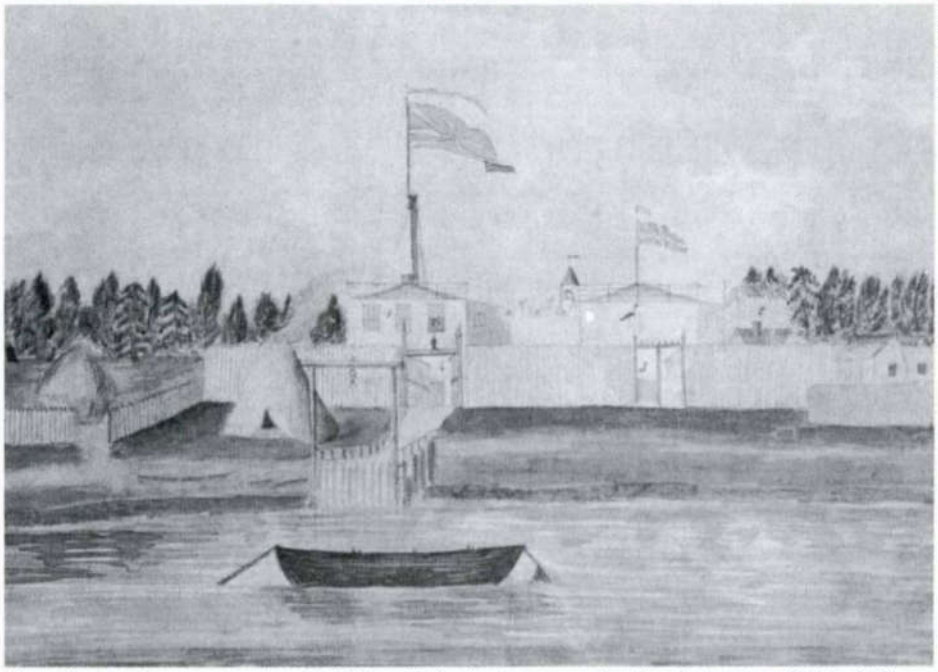
During the winter of 1811-12, Christie was very busy "prosecuting" the timber business on several fronts. Timber for shipment was, of course, still being prepared in the sawpits. But during that same winter, he was constantly employing a variety of tradesmen from Moose including the blacksmith with his assistant, the bricklayer, the carpenter, the millwright and the armourer. All these men were kept busy beginning both the construction of buildings and the preparation of ironwork for the sawmill.

In May of 1812, Christie sent a letter to London by way of Canada, suggesting that it might be possible to use water wheels as motive power for the sawmill. By the time the letter was presented to the governing Committee, the intended steam engine was crated and awaiting shipment that summer. Christie was told he could try water wheels, and if they worked, then he was to send back the steam engine. In the event, however, Christie had realized that water wheels would not work due to ". . . the Force of the Ice and Floods at its breaking up and . . . by the defficiency of Water through the middle of the Summer".

The steam engine arrived in the fall of 1812, the shipment consisting of "82 pieces and 12 boxes". However, what was not included was an invoice listing all necessary parts, nor a man to assemble the engine. In a letter from Boulton and Watt Company, dated 29 February 1812, the Company was reminded that they had agreed to find a man for erecting the engine and send him to the Soho works for familiarization. This had not yet happened and time was running out. Clearly, it was not done in time.

While the governing Committee was busy, during the year 1812-13, finding a suitable engineer, Christie and the tradesmen from Moose Factory were kept busy preparing for the eventual installation of the engine. Fortunately, Christie had a drawing of a 20 horsepower Boulton and Watt engine, which they were using as a basis for the preparatory work. In a letter sent with the returning ships in the fall of 1812, Christie emphasized that any engineer hired to come out to Moose had to work with Boulton and Watt and make certain that nothing was missing, ". . . as no assistance whatever can be had in this Country/such as Castings, & etc.". Even bolts or screws, if over one inch in diameter, could not be repaired at Moose.

By the summer of 1813, the governing Committee had finally found an engineer, John Pickard, who was sent out to Moose for the next year. However, there were already some signs of difficulty for the timber business, even while Pickard began to erect the steam engine. The armistice between England, Russia and Prussia had drastically lowered the cost of timber in England. But, as the war was continuing elsewhere on the continent and in light of preferential duties applied to goods coming from the Colonies, it seemed as though



HBC Archives

Moose Factory, from a watercolour by William Richards who was employed at the fort from 1804 to 1811. Large stands of timber can be seen beyond the shoreline.

the production of deals would continue to be worthwhile. Christie was encouraged to concentrate on them.

After a winter's exertion by Pickard, along with frequent assistance from the Moose blacksmith, the steam engine was ". . . put in Motion for the first time" on 30 July 1814, five years after Christie had first been hired to "survey" the woods near Moose Factory. At about this same time the governing Committee was sending Norwegian timber workers, who were to work on piece rates rather than fixed yearly wages. They were also to be given garden plots and a place to live, but would have to buy any European provisions they needed. "The men will thus have a strong motive for economy as well as industry." Clearly, the Company was anxious to cut back on the costs in the timber business. Indeed, with the example of the Norwegians they hoped to force more of the other servants to operate on the same basis, especially in the timber business.

In its annual letter, written on 25 May 1814, the Committee expected a general peace in Europe in the near future. This likely would have an effect on wood prices. But, the advantages of an exemption from duty on wood coming from its North American lands, together with the advantage it hoped for from switching to piece work, ". . . afford a hope that it [the timber business] may be carried on to a profit".

Although the engine was running in July and John Pickard the engineer returned to England in the fall of 1814, the timber business continued to have problems. For one thing, it appears that not all necessary parts had in fact been brought, as the steam engine only operated one-half of the mill during the winter of 1814-15. More parts were sent out with the ships in the summer of 1815. Meanwhile, another problem arose. The engine had continued working until frost set in. Then, ". . . the frozen Earth, which adhered to the sides of the building below the surface had so much power as to shift the whole body of the Engine House and caused them a great deal of trouble to bring back to its former levels". In order to prevent a further occurrence in the future, Christie prepared a deep drainage ditch around the building, filling it up with dry sand and stones. Finally, it should be noted that the journals were regularly reporting the need for more work on the engine. Clearly, the operation was not without its frustrations.

The Committee was very anxious to recoup some of its expenses and in several summers sent extra ships to bring a cargo of timber. The return of ships from the Bay was always a race with the weather and ice, and in 1815 the ship from Moose Factory, including the extra timber ship, did not get out of the Bay and had to winter over.

In spite of this and in spite of ". . . the return of Peace in Europe", the Committee was still indicating in its annual letter of May 1816, that white deals would ". . . maintain as good a Price or better" than those from the Baltic or other sources. They were confident enough of their position that they were sending another extra ship out in the summer of 1816. Once again the

ships could not get away in the fall and had to winter over. The second decade of the nineteenth century was one of extreme cold. It is, therefore, not surprising that the ships were frequently trapped in the Bay.

Whether Alexander Christie could no longer overcome his frustrations with the steam engine and shipping, or whether he could simply see no way of making the timber business into a major profit making venture, he felt it was time to call a halt. He wrote to the Committee in November 1816, in a letter sent by way of Canada, that it was time to put ". . . a stop to the Timber Trade or at least . . . materially confine it . . ." supporting this position with calculations about the business.

In reply in May 1817, the Committee accepted Christie's recommendations:

> . . . it [the Timber Trade] was undertaken as you know, chiefly as an experiment during the check which was given to the more important concerns of the Company & on the return of Peace, and the reviving activity of their more valuable Trade, it was natural to suppose that had it ever been more prosperous it could hardly continue to be an object of great Attention.

The Committee was certain of the wisdom of this decision, since the most recent deals that Christie had sent had sold for considerably less than he had allowed in his calculations.

It is interesting to note that the Committee gave a variety of reasons for discontinuing the extensive sawmill operation. Besides the fact that the war had ended, the timber prices were going down, and the view that it was a failed experiment, another reason was given in a letter to Thomas Vincent, Superintendent of the Southern District. In this letter of 14 May 1817 the Committee explained:

> The establishment of the Timber Trade was intended principally to provide Home Cargoes for Ships which might have carried out Colonists, that object being suspended for the present. We direct the Establishment to be reduced to what may be necessary to prepare such a quantity of Deals as may be required to complete the loading of the Regular Ships. No Deals but the very best quality should be ship'd, the others will serve for Factory use.

Whether the reason given here was the most significant, the events certainly fit. The working party for the Selkirk settlers came on Hudson's Bay Company ships in 1811, with the first main party of settlers wintering at York Factory and moving south in the spring of 1812. The last group of Selkirk settlers came out in 1815.

Regardless, the Committee agreed to drastically reduce the size of the establishment at the sawmill. Christie was to be offered a situation in the Company service that he was ". . . competent to fill and disposed to undertake." The Company had treated Christie well throughout the period since he first came into their employ in the spring of 1809. They gave him a great deal of latitude in making decisions about the sawmill operation. To assist in these decisions, the Company displayed an attitude usually foreign to it, and provided Christie with a great deal of information about selling prices and prospects. Christie had also been allowed the choice between a per annum salary of £300, or a piece rate, whichever was to Christie's advantage. Now, however, with his leaving, the mill was to be superintended by Christie's deputy, Mr. D. R. Stewart, but at a lower rate of pay. Reflecting the diminished significance of the mill, he was to be paid a salary of £80 per annum and ⅓ of the profit from the mill's operation. (This latter was not likely to be large.) The Company justified what it considered to be its relative generosity to Mr. Stewart because of the value of the equipment, and not on the "importance of the business".

The mill continued in operation for a time and some deals were sent to England when there was room in the ships at least as late as 1828 when the price of deals sold is still being listed in the Committee minutes. But the mill, steam engine, and employees no longer figured as a major item in correspondence or accounts. As the Committee concluded in its letter of 7 May 1817, to Christie, the mill and engine ". . . have been attended with a heavy expense, & I fear will never produce any adequate advantage" Indeed, the 1844 journal of the Reverend George Barnley, a Wesleyan missionary, records on 23 February "We passed the ruins of the old Steam Saw Mill, long since deserted, as a losing speculation . . .". ♦

David R. Dyck is Professor of History at the University of Winnipeg. Professor Dyck writes: "Preliminary research has indicated that by 1827 the steam engine was considered "Unproductive Property". Further, it appears that the steam engine and sawmill were dismantled and returned to England in 1835. A new sawmill, again steam engine driven, was erected at Moose Factory in 1883."

Island of the Sorrows

By GARY THOMSON

The burial trenches run in gently curving hollows across open meadow then disappear into bush cover, alder and sumac and wild rose. Field daisies and goldenrod make a gentle border. Symbolic white crosses stand in dogged rows, some pulled aslant by the settling earth.

Nature has softened the horror of this place of mass death, but Annie Simard, my guide, recalls it in chilling detail: "Porters carried the dead from the fever sheds or from the ships and dumped them here two, three, four deep. Most had no money, no clothes. Few friends or relatives to grieve for them. Many ran fever-crazy into the woods and were later buried where they dropped. On the worst day 112 died. June 24, 1847. The worst day of plague summer."

Few Canadians know of the sufferings attached to Grosse Ile, a green and pleasant St. Lawrence island lazing 50 kilometres below Quebec City.

For a hundred years and more it served as central quarantine station for the flood of European immigrants who were striving to reach the Canadian interior.

Public access to the island was always limited. After its closure in 1937 visitors had to secure permission from Canada's Department of Agriculture for limited viewing of the buildings.

Now, with Parks Canada's decision to open Grosse Ile as a National Historic Site in 1993, Canadians will be allowed entry into a dramatic period setting of this country's development.

The rush of immigrants began shortly after the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815 as armies of men sought new livelihoods. Land clearances in Scotland and industrialization throughout Great Britain convinced many small farmers to emigrate. Years of famine in the 1840s drove tens of thousands of Irish peasants to embarkation ports at Cork, Dublin and Belfast.

The great timber fleets carried much of this "walking ballast" to North America. In their greed and haste many ship-masters provided skimpy provisions, overcrowding and sickly conditions for the impoverished migrants.

Often the ships carried fever and contagion. In 1832 the colonial legislature responded to local fears of a virulent cholera epidemic in Europe and Britain. Assembly members chose the isolated island of Grosse Ile on which to build a quarantine station.

The Passenger Act specified procedures for all incoming ships: Stop for inspection at designated buoy markers; signal the presence of on-board sick with a blue flag; procure a certificate of health before proceeding to Quebec.

Still, the volume of immigrant traffic that spring overwhelmed the small facility. By early June 397 ships had arrived and the dying began in earnest. Medical personnel passed many ships along to Quebec with only cursory inspection. By late summer the city reported 3,200 cholera deaths. More than that perished at Grosse Ile.

Annie Simard raises her arm over a broad bay on the northwest corner of the island. Now at low tide mud flats gleam in the sun. A cormorant flies toward the bordering spruce trees. "Cholera Bay" she says. "Here the victims of '32 were buried, when the tide was out. Workmen dug large pits in the mud with wooden forks. Pay was several shillings each body."

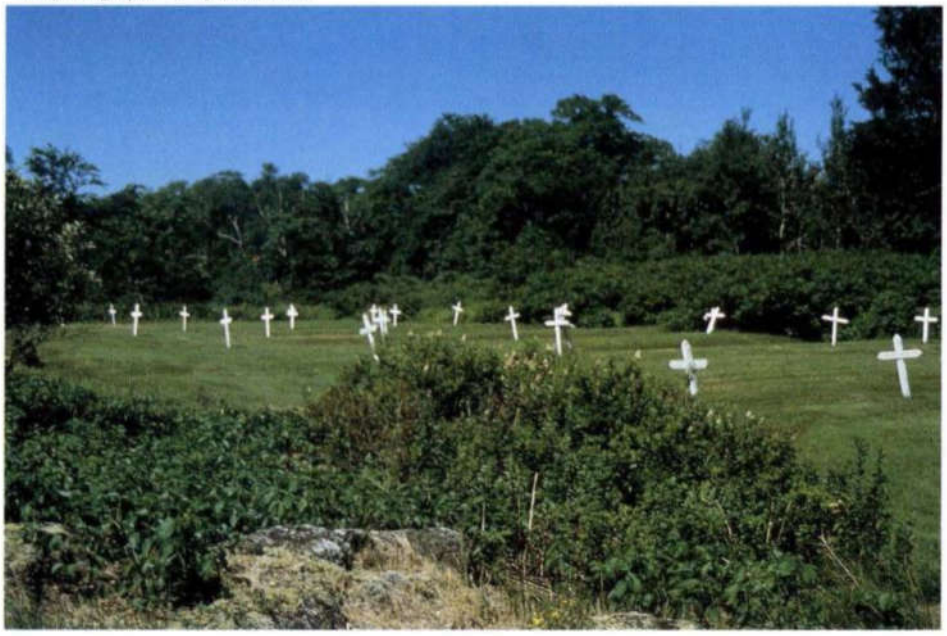
Today, visitors no longer need special permits to conjure the suffering and lamentations of Canada's early boat people. A new tourist organization in Montmagny, on the south shore opposite Grosse Ile, maintains sole responsibility for transporting and guiding sightseers. Founded in 1983, the non-profit *Corporation Pour la Mise en Valeur de Grosse Ile* has a mandate to monitor and evaluate for Parks Canada acceptable visitor numbers, potential problem spots and informative itineraries.

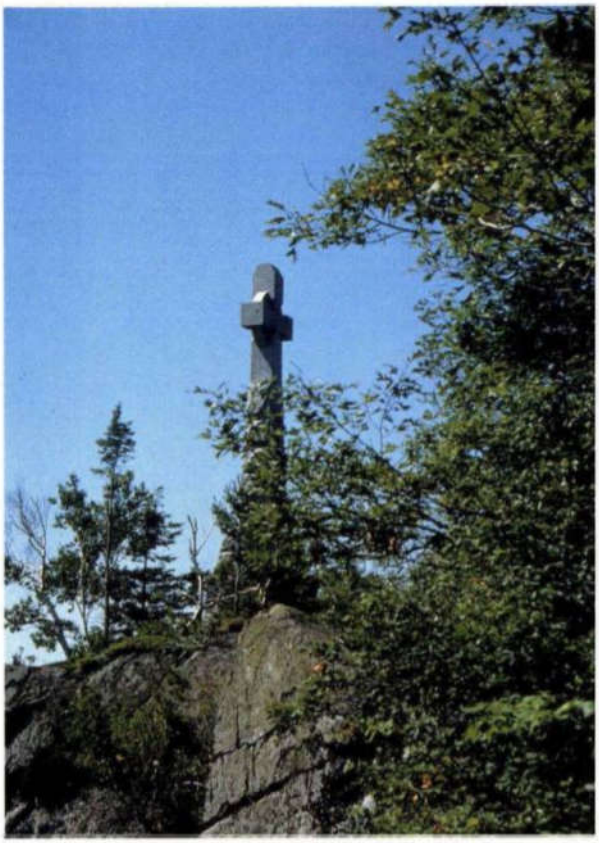
Company President Jean-Marie Dionne told me, "We insist on common sense viewing: Keep together on marked trails. No entry to most buildings. Respect the grave sites and memorials."

To establish a context for Grosse Ile, M. Dionne directs visitors first to the elaborate interpretive display in the new tourist office in Montmagny.

Fever shed #4, one of 12 such buildings. The interior walls were painted red in the belief that the colour promoted recovery. Windows were painted red to keep out "harmful" daylight. The sick lay in crowded rows of bunks.

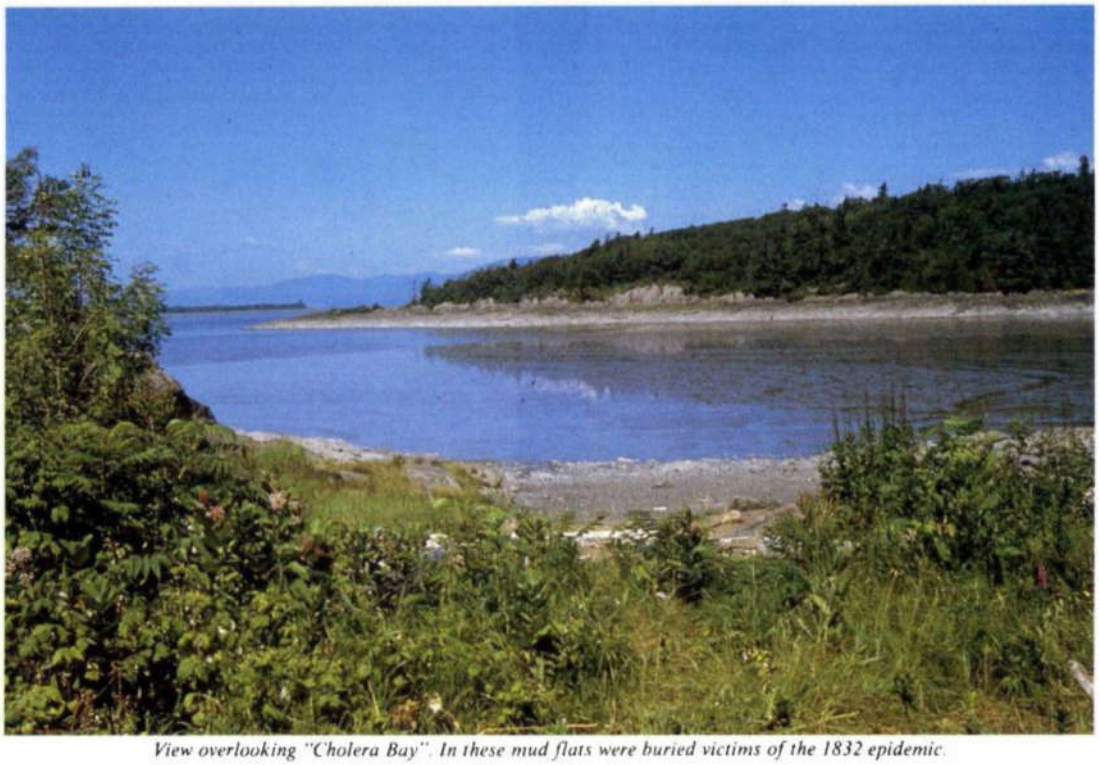
Victims of the 1847 typhus tragedy lie in mass graves in this field under simple white crosses. There are over 5,000 recorded deaths for the famine years, although it is thought by some that as many as 12,000 perished. All photographs are by the author.





The 40 foot high Celtic cross was erected in 1909 by the Ancient Order of Hibernians as a memorial to the typhus victims: "Sacred to the memory of thousands of Irish emigrants, who, to preserve the Faith, suffered hunger and exile in 1847-48, and stricken with fever, ended here their sorrowful pilgrimage".

The Roman Catholic church was dedicated to St. Luke in 1875. Close by is the bell from an 1832 church destroyed by fire.



View overlooking "Cholera Bay". In these mud flats were buried victims of the 1832 epidemic.

Four broad aisles of building models, maps, period photos, and a French language video emphasize the island's early medical importance. Here a miniature horse-drawn ambulance rumbles toward the hospital. Nearby stands a newly painted guardhouse. In the original, armed men prohibited quarantined patients moving out of restricted areas.

Still, nothing here can prepare the visitor for the poignancy of Grosse Ile's greatest tragedy. Approach to the island leads close to a towering Celtic cross on the southwest tip. Stark and beautiful, the monument commemorates the Irish summer of sorrow, 1847.

Two years of disastrous potato blight and disease drove many thousands of Irish tenant farmers to emigrate that summer. Fearing sickness and overcrowding, American ports had closed to the newcomers.

Thus by 31 May, 40 vessels with 15,000 passengers stretched in a line two miles down the St. Lawrence. All held sick or dead. One report tells of bodies being winched out of a hold, the golden hair of a girl drifting in a breeze.

On Grosse Ile 1,200 sick suffered the delirium, raging thirst, headache and diarrhea of typhus. They crowded the little wooden church, stifling canvas tents and new raised sheds. They huddled on the ground, under sparse shade.

By midsummer 22 of the 26 doctors on the island had suffered typhus symptoms. Catholic and Anglican priests worked in the fetid sheds and hauled buckets of river water to soothe raging fevers. Nursing staff, soldiers, and cooks fought to provide adequate food, sleeping areas and common comforts.

Death came in staggering numbers, 50 per day on average. The resident Roman Catholic priest wrote in his register, "I, the undersigned, have this day buried Patrick Murphy, John Kelly, Maria Brown and forty three others . . ."

Workmen filled the common burial trenches; and to cover the bodies brought additional topsoil from Montmagny. The Hospital Steward gathered money and personal effects of the dead who had no relatives. Some funds he used to care for orphaned children. All of these orphans were later adopted by families along the river, with the proviso that they keep their Irish names.

By summer's end more than 70,000 Irish immigrants had stopped at Grosse Ile. Of these 9,000 needed hospitalization. Officials noted 5,300 deaths, with many more unrecorded.

Never again did Grosse Isle face an equivalent nightmare. Efficient, fast steamships brought healthier passengers. Vigilant inspection halted later epidemics from Europe — typhus in 1868, yellow fever in 1889 and bubonic plague in 1902. Mostly, doctors concentrated on innoculation against the "childhood diseases", smallpox, diphtheria, and scarlet fever.

Government funding went to modernizing and updating existing facilities. In the 1890s new steam chambers were installed to disinfect clothing and baggage. A decade later workmen constructed a hotel for immigrants travelling first class; and later a hotel for each of second and third class.

After World War I many steamer captains preferred to travel through to Montreal, thus avoiding the dockless island. If necessary they used ship-to-shore radio to call a doctor on board.

In 1937 Grosse Ile closed as an immigration hospital. Now owned by Agriculture Canada, it serves as quarantine centre for animals and as a training facility for veterinarians in exotic diseases.

During World War II Canada's Department of National Defence conducted secret "germ-warfare" testing on the island, including experiments on an "anthrax bomb". Other "germ-warfare" tests are said to have been conducted during the height of the Cold War in the 1950s.

Several factors determine Grosse Ile's selection as a National Historic Park: its importance to the early development of Canada; collection of extant artifacts, and development feasibility.

Many of the island's 54 buildings and wharves need repair and stabilizing, with recent cost estimates reaching $250,000.

The island's historical importance is paramount. Countless thousands of immigrants fleeing economic oppression and social upheaval made first, tentative contact with Canada at Grosse Ile. Their later efforts and success at nation-building form an epic tale of which we are all a part. ♦

Freelance writer Gary Thomson lives in Belleville, Ontario.

Peace River Journey, 1916

By Doris H. Pieroth

A twenty-four year old secretary hardly seems likely to follow in the footsteps of Canada's long line of adventurers — the explorers, fur traders and goldseekers — but in June of 1916 choice farmland drew Edna Tompkins to Alberta's Peace River country.

When she made the long trek alone from Edmonton to file a homestead claim at Peace River Crossing, rudimentary railways had replaced the river and portage travel of a century and a quarter before.

The promise of free homesteads attracted twentieth century settlers to the Peace River, much as possible riches and instant fortune had lured goldseekers to the river's headwaters in the 1870s, but two-hundred miles of muskeg and forests had remained an enormous barrier to settlers wanting to move on west through the prairie provinces. It took the arrival of the rails to make greater settlement in the region possible. After the Grand Trunk Pacific reached Edson in the fall of 1910, the Edson Trail was cut through to Grande Prairie. Settlers moved into the Peace country over that route for the next four years.

In 1916, the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway (E.D. & B.C.) reached Peace River Crossing, Spirit River, and Grande Prairie, and the region stood on the threshold of a population explosion. But a true boom in population and expansion had to wait until the end of World War I, which brought westward migration to a virtual halt.

Edna and her husband Stuart Tompkins were among many Western Canadians whose plans to move to the Peace were halted by the Great War. They were Ontario natives with strong United Empire Loyalist roots. Edna's father, a railway telegrapher, moved his family West before the turn of the century.

Stuart first went West to work on a ranch near Calgary one summer during his days as a student at the University of Toronto and he traveled on up to the Peace. Years later he wrote, "A long time ago in my salad days I fell in love with the Peace River country. When I first saw Fort St. John there was nothing there except a Hudson's Bay Co. store." He graduated from Toronto in 1909, and moved to Edmonton soon afterward. He met Edna Christie at the Alberta Department of Education where they both worked, and after a three-year courtship she married him on 27 January 1915.

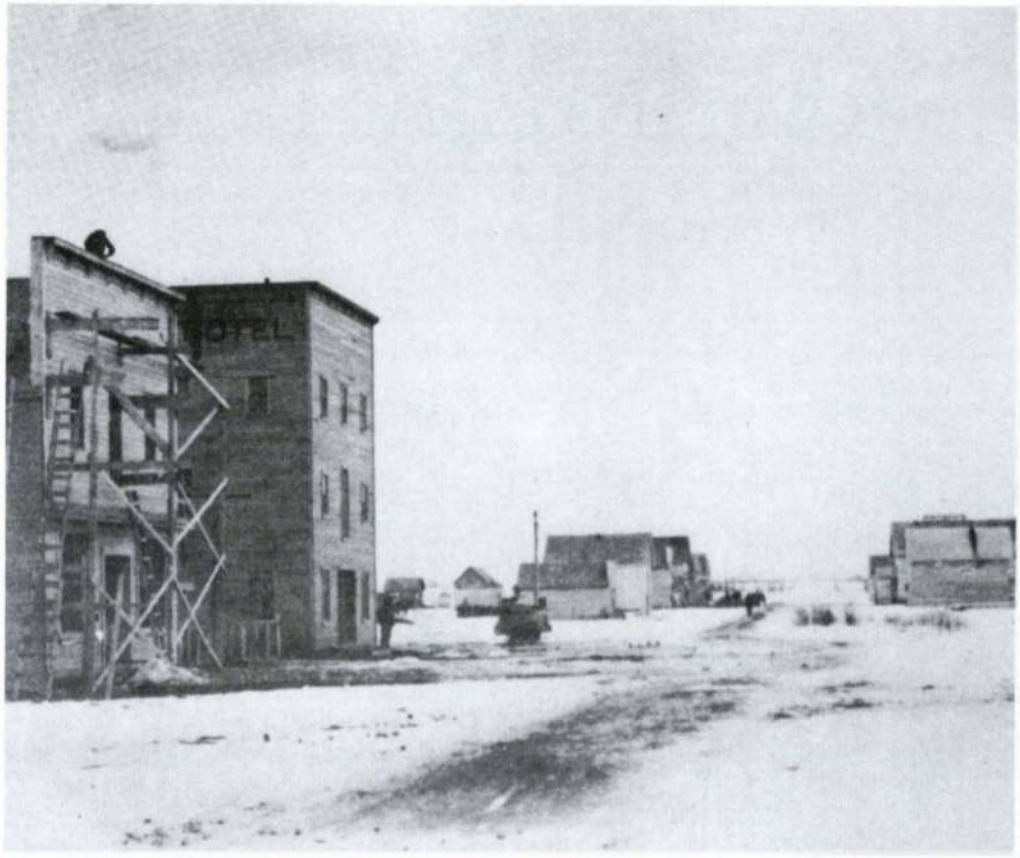
Stuart Tompkins enlisted in Edmonton's 66th Battalion on 1 July 1915, and entered officers' training in November. As a newly commissioned lieutenant he left for England with the 89th Alberta Overseas Battalion on 25 May 1916. While he was in training in Calgary, he and Edna had made their plans to homestead on the Peace River after the war.

During World War I some Canadian army wives joined their husbands in England. Edna spent two of the war years in London, where she worked in the Canadian Army Pay and Records Office, but before she left for England herself she made the journey to claim land on Canada's last farming frontier. Her letters to Stuart recorded her experiences.

Traveling on a combination passenger and freight train, she arrived at Peace River Crossing (the present town of Peace River) on Tuesday, 6 June. The rough trip convinced her that the E.D. & B.C. deserved its nickname — "The Exceedingly Dangerous and Badly Constructed." The rail line ended on top of a bluff high above the river. She stepped off the train into a roaring cloud of mosquitoes and rode down into the raw frontier town in horse-drawn wagon that bounced over logs and debris littering the ungraded road.

The train trip itself had taken a toll, and her lodgings at the Crossing introduced her to the rude and unpolished conditions of life in the hinterland. She gave Stuart her first impressions in a letter that evening:

> **June 6, 1916:** Here I am in a little 2x4 Crossing writing to you. Well it has been awful. I have never gone through such an experience. The road is one long line of wavy undulations with the undulations on each rail reversed. You can have no idea of the discomfort and from McLennan, where we changed, the train actually speeded 5 miles an hour and such an entrance to the town — just a sand bank and then the wildest ride down the mountain side and [into] the town. I've got nervous prostration. Half the men would not ride, but got out. Then Mr. Carson gives me no encouragement as to securing anything worth while but as I have to stay here until Friday I shall stick close to him, but I certainly feel



Glenbow Archives

The town of Peace River Crossing — later known as Peace River — early in the twentieth century.

blue and disgusted. I have a bed in a rooming house (nuff said). I simply can't sleep: someone sawing wood under my window, pool playing in the basement and as the house is of cardboard they might as well be in my room, besides other dreadful noises too numerous to mention. I'm scrawling this off in bed. As this won't be posted 'til I reach Edmonton (If I ever do) it will be "continued in our next." Think of putting in this night, two others and two whole days in my present state of mind.

The land agent, Mr. Carson, had said nothing to off-set the effects of her 24-hour train ride. Next morning, however, found her in much better humour, and she climbed high above the river to write again.

June 7: Here I am sprawled out on the highest peak around the crossing. . . . It is a gorgeous day, the sky so blue, makes you think it's heaven shining through . . . I can see the Smoky, the Peace and the Hart and the wonderful Hart Bridge not yet completed, and as far as eye can see the valleys are dotted with settlers' shacks. I can also watch the ferry plying back and forth and four pretty islands in the Peace.

One cannot help but wonder at the Almighty's plan when you look at such boundless space and compare it with overburdened Europe. Of course one can make that comparison anywhere in Canada, but here the contrast is much greater.

She also had a few words about the E.D. & B.C.: "Really, some day their old track is going to blow away. It is built on the cleanest, whitest sand which blows over the track on the slightest provocation. Well my pencil is worn out so I'll have to stop until I get back for a knife."

That afternoon she filed their claim. The details went into her postscript to the day's letter:

5 PM (same day): Well dearest we have a farm!!! I've been and gone and done it. SW of 31-83-22-5th exactly six miles due west of the town and if finances permit it I shall drive out there tomorrow and gaze at it. It has been filed on for two years but as the entrant never appeared, it is canceled and *I have it*. I earnestly pray it won't be a white elephant on our hands. All the contiguous quarters are patented. . . .

Neil Sutherland, a Strathcona boy, has a homestead somewhere near ours. He was in town today and I may see him this evening. . . .

Since its enactment in 1912, the requirement of three years residence on homestead claims had resulted in a number of forfeitures. The Tompkinses profited from such a cancellation.

On Thursday she "put in a long drawn out morning," and went with the government land guide in the afternoon to see their quarter section. That evening she wrote again.,

> **June 8:** Dearest Boy, Back from the farm! I have been out and viewed our home to be. It has actually the walls of a log shack on it already and there are at least two fairly good clearings, and one of the neighbours who very kindly took us over to it said twenty five acres could be cleared in one season. They are going to have a big fire this fall which will take out a lot of the brush. . . . It is a splendid neighbourhood. The farm adjoining has 70 acres in crop and a lot of good buildings. . . . The man who drove me out was . . . [a] very fine old chap with lots of money and has a homestead about 3 miles from ours and not so good though nearer to town, *but* there's to be a railroad near us. NOW! Oh yes, he took me for an Ontario schoolmar'm. What do you know about that?
>
> It has been the most perfect weather here since I came, so warm and bright.

E.D. & B.C. schedules often changed unexpectedly, and she learned that the train back to Edmonton left at 7:30 a.m. on Friday rather than 3 p.m. as she had been led to believe. This was welcome news, but she feared "perhaps we shall have a wait at McLennan instead, but time will tell. I shall finish this lengthy epistle en route tomorrow if the rocking cradle permits." Forty miles out of Edmonton she wrote "We're now on the home stretch . . . thank Heaven. I'm so dirty and hungry and tired."

When Edna reached home she sent Stuart a careful accounting of her expenses. Three dollars for the wagon that took her out to their claim seemed reasonable since they "were out from one until six o'clock and had a splendid team." The filing fee was ten dollars, round-trip rail fare was $25.35, and three nights in the rooming house totalled a dollar and half. She took pride in economizing when she "didn't take a sleeper either way and mamma gave me lunch which lasted until I got back."

By this time Stuart had landed in England. Unfounded rumors that the troop ship, the *Olympic*, sister ship to the *Titanic*, had been sunk prompted him to send a trans-Atlantic cable announcing his safe crossing.

> **June 10:** My dearest Boy, Your cable announcing your safe arrival came a few hours before I arrived home from the North, and after having a bath etc. I journeyed over to give the news to your mother. . . .

Edna Christie Tompkins, 1917

Lieutenant Stuart Tompkins just before his departure for the front, May 1916.

Glenbow Archives

Cars of the "Exceedingly Dangerous and Badly Constructed" Railway (E.D. & B.C.) en route to Peace River Crossing.

Personally I am feeling fine since I got off that there thing wat plays leapfrog on the rails. . . .

Is it not sad about Stanley Fife being killed? or did you hear? I suppose though you will be able to get Canadian casualties. The poor fellows are getting it terribly now. . . . everywhere the clouds are black, but who knows, there may be a silver lining.

On my arrival . . . I was greeted with mud, wind, and rain together with a decidedly chilly atmosphere and after the sunny north it was anything but pleasant. . . ."

Growing casualty lists brought the harsh reality of the war home to the prairies. Before year's end Stuart Tompkins, too, would endure the bitter fighting and grim conditions of the Western Front.

Edna left Edmonton for New York soon after returning from Peace River Crossing and sailed to her own wartime adventure in London. After seeing action at Vimy Ridge Stuart was invalided from the trenches in France to an English convalescent hospital. He and Edna went home to Canada together in the spring of 1918. Later that summer he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force that went to Siberia as part of the intervention in Russia's Civil War.

He returned to Alberta in May 1919. He and Edna did not settle six miles west of Peace River Crossing, and they forfeited the claim she had filed three years earlier. But Stuart still had a "yen" for the Peace River. He bought a piece of land at the confluence of the Peace and Halfway Rivers in British Columbia in a joint venture with his brother Philip, who settled on the farm and remained there.

Stuart returned to the field of education and spent four years teaching at the Lethbridge High School. Edna had a second and longer frontier experience during the four years in the 1920s that Stuart served as Superintendent of Schools for the Yukon Territory.

After he received his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1931, he began a long career as Professor of History at the University of Oklahoma. He was one of the first North Americans to teach and write in the area of Russian history, and he spent several summers as a visiting professor at the University of Alberta. Edna traded the role of Peace River homesteader for that of faculty wife and partner in her husband's research and writing. ◆

Doris H. Pieroth of Seattle, Washington, is the editor of a volume of Stuart Tomkins' wartime letters, "A Canadian's Road to Russia: Letters From the Great War Decade", published in 1988 by the University of Alberta Press. Her work has appeared in such journals as "Pacific Northwest Quarterly" and "The Chronicles of Oklahoma".

Afterword:

Stuart Tompkins was born on 26 June 1886 at Lyn, Ontario. He died in Victoria, British Columbia, on 11 October 1977 at the age of 91.

Edna Jane Christie was born at Mimico, Etobicoke County, Ontario, on 5 November 1891. She died in Victoria, British Columbia, on 22 November 1990, just after her 98th birthday and three weeks after she had returned from a cruise that took her as far as Egypt.

The Short, Happy Life And Sad Death of Fred Tibbs

By Richard Mackie

'Tis there that I lie with my head in a pond
And play with a valueless Tichborne bond;
'Tis there that I sip pure Horniman's tea
To the sound of the gong and the howling sea.

'Tis there that I revel in soapsuds and rum
And wait till my creditors choose to come;
'Tis there that I dream of the days when I
Shall soar to the moon through the red-hot sky.

—from "A lunatic's love song," (Anon), in *More Comic and Curious Verse*, (Penguin).

If you walk down to the end of the government wharf in Tofino, on Vancouver Island's west coast, past the sign marking the unofficial beginning — or end — of the Trans-Canada Highway, you will have a fine view of the southern part of Clayoquot Sound. On the left is Stubbs Island, which protects this part of the sound from the full force of the North Pacific Ocean.

In front of you and to your right, and indeed above and all around you, are the dramatic shapes of Vargas and Meares islands, at times as low as the sea, and at times as high as the sky itself. The peak on Meares Island carries the appropriate name of Lone Cone, while in the distance Cat Face looms on Vargas Island.

Sometimes, in the summer, the sound is as tranquil as a millpond, but in the winter the ocean swells are relentless and the clouds bring eternal rain. The smaller islands in the sound reflect these different moods: one of them, Morpheus Island, is named after the Greek god of sleep and dreams; not far away are the Deadman Islets and Deadman Passage.

Only half a mile from the foot of Government Wharf is Tibbs Island. How did an island in such a spectacular setting come to have such a plain name? At first glance "Tibbs Island" does not seem to belong in the same world as Maquinna or Flores, Wickaninnish or Vargas.

This is the story of the life and death of Frederick Gerald Tibbs, an Englishman who died on the Clayoquot sandspit early one morning in 1921 and who gave his name to an island. It is the story of a man who is still talked about seventy years after his death, long after more eminent people have been forgotten. It is an immigrant story, and it is a story of courage, tragedy, and beauty.

Fred Tibbs was born in 1886 in Essex to a prosperous family. Through his grandmother he was related to the Victorian poet Robert Browning; his father's family had been oil brokers in London for several generations. Fred was brought up at Thorpe, Sanderstead, Surrey, in a house staffed with servants. When he was four he had an accident that altered his life: he fell and somehow cut his face on the jagged machinery of a sewing machine. The wound refused to heal, operations were necessary, and Fred was left with a gaping scar on the left side of his face and neck.

Fred was educated at the Bancroft School and took a farm training course before coming to Canada. Frances Doman, his niece, believed that his facial wound "embarrassed him terribly, so he wanted to get right away where he wasn't known."

It is not clear when Tibbs came to Canada. A Bible in the possession of Christopher Doman, his great nephew, is inscribed: "Freddie with Mother's love. March 9, 1907. *Read* it, *Believe* it, *Love it always*." This was Fred's twenty-first birthday, so it is possible that he came to Canada shortly after coming of age: this Bible may even have been a farewell present from his mother. He may have inherited some family money when he came of age.

By 5 December 1908, twenty months after turning twenty-one, we find Fred living at Long Beach (then known as Long Bay), Vancouver Island, a few miles south of Stubbs Island. His first surviving letter, addressed to the Clayoquot merchant Walter Dawley, reads as follows: "Tidal Wave Ranch, Long Bay, Clayoquot, Dec. 5th/08. Please send 1 Box Pophams Pilot bread biscuits. F.G. Tibbs."

Tibb's second letter to Walter Dawley from Tidal Wave Ranch is dated 7 February 1909. It reads:

Dear Sir,

Kindly accept herewith best thanks for Christmas matter sent by you. I may add that not having any

Royal British Columbia Museum

The Tibbs family, Christmas, 1910. Fred is standing at the top left. The group also includes brother Percy, father, mother and sister.

particular personal use for same, I handed it over to Mr. Coombes' family who seemed quite pleased. Notwithstanding my thanks are equally sincere to you not so much on account of the value of the offering as the thoughtfulness included in the action.

May your health continue in the utmost supreme degree of satisfaction. I may possibly be coming down shortly to renew — once more — the liquid dominion of Clayoquot.

Yours faithfully
F.G. Tibbs

Fred reached the west coast of Vancouver Island at a fortunate time. The boom of the Edwardian era transformed Clayoquot's economy. The Canadian North Pacific sealing fleet regularly stopped there for supplies and for Indian sealing crews before departing for the Bering Sea. The Dewdney mining syndicate, also based at Victoria, operated on an extensive scale in the sound. Brewster's Clayoquot Canning Company was a large employer, as was Sutton's sawmill at Mosquito Harbour on Meares Island.

There was work in Clayquot Sound, and between 1908 and his death in 1921 Fred worked at a number of different jobs.

He wrote regularly to Clayoquot merchant Walter Dawley, whose large business correspondence has fortunately survived. Fred's letters to Dawley provide a glimpse of life and work on Clayoquot Sound in the early years of this century and reveal Fred's inner world.

Land-clearing and house-building were the first order of business. In 1909 he sent a succession of notes from Tidal Wave Ranch up to Dawley at Clayoquot asking for a variety of supplies. A typical letter reads: "W. Dawley. Please send 1 (20¢) tin of pink paint as nearly as possible as per pattern colour & oblige, also: 1 Gal. red roofing paint: — as before. F.G. Tibbs."

In other letters he asked Dawley to send him such supplies as thimbles, brown Windsor soap, Vaseline, and "Zam-buk," a healing-salve used for such injuries as burns and axe wounds.

In February or March 1910, Fred was hired by the Dominion Government to help in the construction of a lighthouse on Triangle Island, a desolate piece of rock in the Pacific about two hundred miles north west of Clayoquot Sound. A cone-shaped island subjected to the incessant Pacific gales, Triangle Island was uncharacteristically barren of trees.

All material had to be landed on a shale beach at the base of the 680-foot rock and then carried to the summit in the teeth of steady winter gales. During the spring of 1910 Tibbs and his colleagues built several structures on the island including a forty-six foot concrete lighthouse. The wind was so severe that it blew the cedar shingles from the roofs as soon as they had been laid, and it took two strong men to push open a door from the inside. Fred summarized the difficulties in a letter to Dawley:

Triangle Island, B.C.
March 15th, 1910

Dear Mr Dawley,

After a week and two days we effected a landing on this mountain top, surrounded by ocean. Talk about wind! Not a tree, not a bush. Lighthouse 680 feet up. Here one may obtain a fair idea of what a west coast gale consists of. Will be obliged if you send up by the next boat coming here 1 pair of tennis shoes size 9, and if you have one, a good deep toned mouth harp.

Hoping that the winds may descend upon you with slightly less violence than hereabouts.

Yours truly,
F.G. Tibbs

A few years later, the lighthouse had to be abandoned altogether. Fred's work at Triangle Island may have resulted from his connections with the Conservative Party. His family background was Conservative, and he had the good luck to come to British Columbia in the midst of Richard McBride's long Conservative premiership.

His lighthouse work gave Fred, now aged twenty-four, enough money ($200 a month) to visit his family in England; he was at home in time for Christmas 1910. His family later recalled that he arrived late at night and, instead of interrupting their sleep, slept in the barn and surprised them in the morning. Fortunately Fred kept in contact with Dawley, and early in 1911 he sent the following letter:

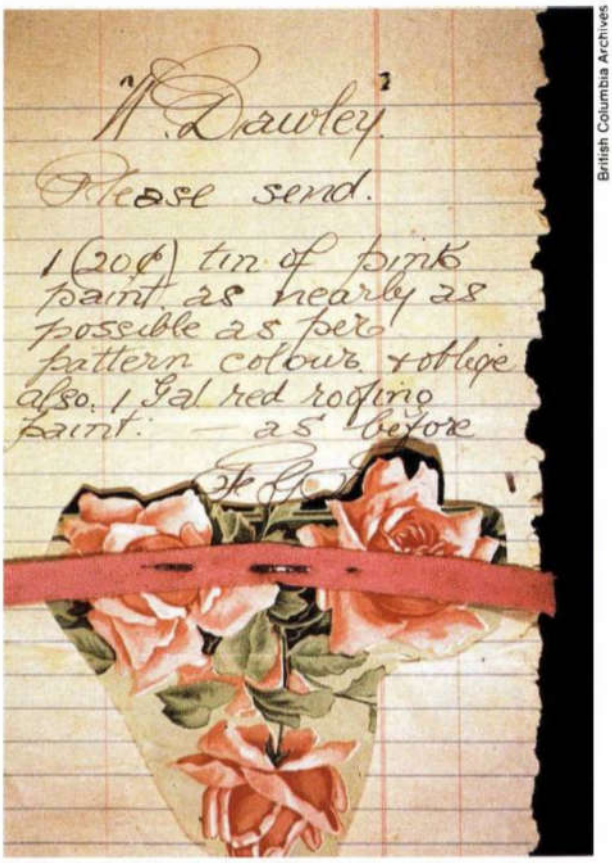
Thorpe
Station: Sanderstead
Sanderstead Surrey

Dear Mr. Dawley,

I hope you got that cheque for November all right, also that you are not suffering with Rheumatism.

How's the wife and family and Clarence [Dawley] and wife? I hope you spent a pleasant Christmas. It was generally understood over here, that you had a heavy fall of snow. . . .

Found the people all O.K. over here and have had a very pleasant stay, which is rapidly approaching the wind up. (DV.) I shall return by the Royal Edward, sailing March 8th/11.


W. Dawley.
Please send.
1 (20¢) tin of pink paint. as nearly as possible as per pattern colour. + oblige
also. 1 Gal red roofing paint. — as before
F.G.T.
British Columbia Archives

Fred's note to Walter Dawley, 1909, requesting paint to match the swatch of wallpaper stapled on.

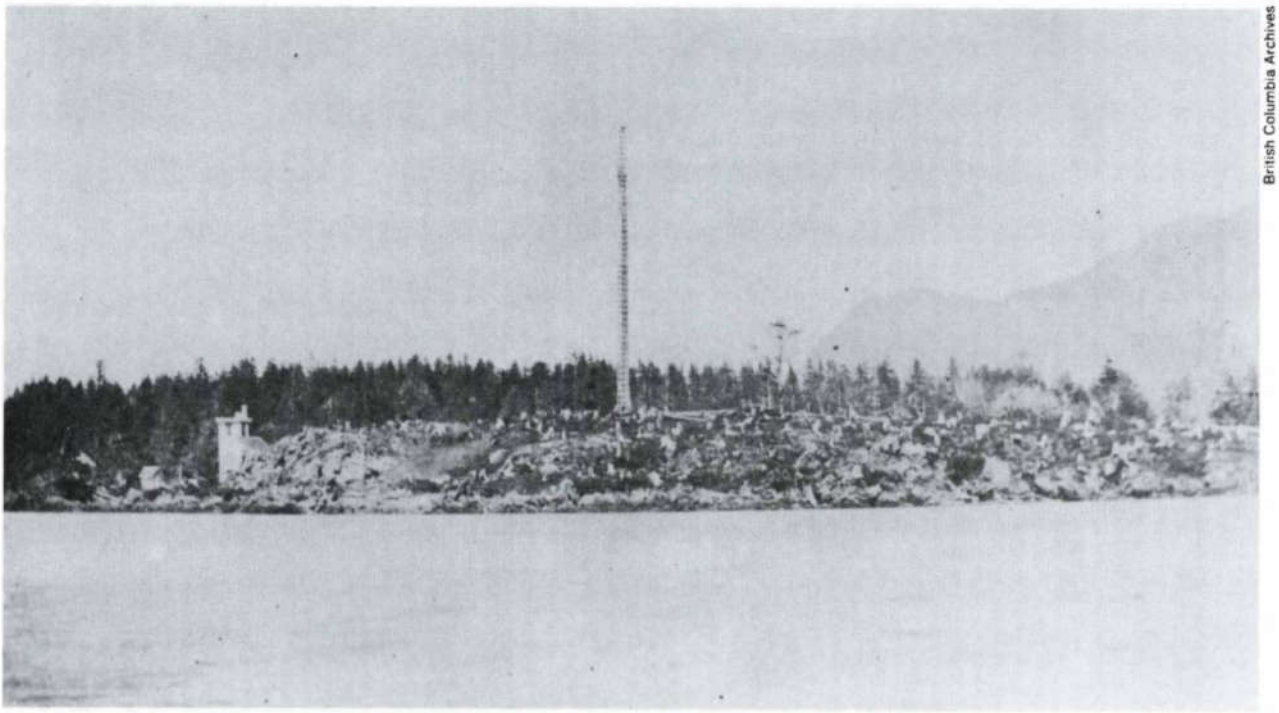
I hope the launch is in good shape and shall be obliged if you will ask Clarence to have it ready for business by the 24th of March or thereabouts. I suppose the road work will be starting up soon after that and I will have to get busy to pay up over-due accounts. . . .

Please convey my regards to Harvey, McLeod, Bob and others. Wishing you and all your people every success.

Yours very truly,
F.G. Tibbs

In the spring of 1911 Fred returned to his ranch, to his road-building, and to his work for the local Conservatives. "You might order some suitable headed writing paper," he told Dawley on 6 November 1911, "and envelopes for the Clayoquot Conservative Association."

By August of 1912 Fred had found work at the Dominion Government's salmon hatchery at Kennedy Lake at the eastern end of Tofino Inlet. He was a member of the hatchery's "Board of Staff" from 1912 until 1915 and periodically thereafter. This was Fred's first permanent job since coming to Canada. He was



British Columbia Archives

Fred Tibbs' "Dreamisle", showing the "castle", at left and the tall lookout tree with its chair at the top. The island is seen from Clayoquot Sound.

paid about $900 a year for this work. His job included collecting sockeye salmon eggs and distributing fry, that is, stocking nearby rivers with young salmon.

As ever Fred did his business through Dawley's store. In December 1912 he was at his best in a letter to Bill Simpson, a clerk at the store. "In connection with the little argument we had over the $50 cheque," he wrote, "it is up to me to bend the knee to your almightiness as it appears I am the illusioned individual. However as I personally expressed my eagerness to apologize in case of my being guilty of a misdemeanor it is not necessary to repeat the grovelling performance. . . . Yours with Zero feet, Fred G. Tibbs."

During 1913 he besieged Bill with requests for Mackintosh water-proof coats, olive oil, Minard's Liniament, and similar supplies. He ended one letter with the cryptic remark: "Yours to the big Long Beach boost." A typical letter written from the Kennedy Lake Hatchery reads:

Aug. 17th/13

Dear Bill:

I am returning the fancy vest for which I can find no use as it's too loose in the back and waist.

However if you still have that blue sweater I tried on please send it up in place of vest but if the blue one is gone send no other, but let it stand until I am able to get down again. If you have the blue one and will send it up I will remit extra $1.50 per return.

If the penangle underwear has arrived and you will send up 2 pairs drawers 34" and 1 undershirt 38" I will remit for these also, but as above send no other.

Thanking you in anticipation, etc. etc.

Fred

In 1912 or 1913 Fred sold his Long Beach property for $5,000 which was, a friend recalled, "a lot of money in those days." At the same time he was making a good income at the hatchery. He invested his money in the stock market, in land in northern British Columbia, and he bought an island in Clayoquot Sound.

Fred had bad luck with his investments. He brought 3,825 shares in the Alaska Homestake Mining Company and 1,900 shares in the Columbia Oil Company. Founded in May 1914 with a capital of one million dollars, the oil company's prospectus gushed enthusiastically about the future of the petroleum industry in Western Canada: "The demand is already beyond the grasp of the imagination, and is growing daily," it stated. By 1921 these shares were worthless. Fred had more luck with his shares in the Okanagan Telephone Company, which were worth $768 on his death.

In about 1913 he invested in two lots in the town of Smithers during the boom caused by the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway through

British Columbia. They were probably swamp when he bought them.

Fred's major investment was not in the stock market or in northern real estate but in Lot 1460, Clayoquot District. On the maps it appears as Arnet Island, but locals know it also as Tibbs Island, Dream Island, and Castle Island.

His policy with this island was straightforward. He would put up not an ordinary settler's shack but a castle. Fred Tibbs would perhaps now be forgotten if it were not for his eccentric activities on Tibbs Island, for which he had the residents of Tofino as a curious audience.

First he clear-cut the island. He left only one tree standing, an enormous spruce which he topped at a hundred feet. As he descended the tree he cut the limbs off. The people of Tofino could see his daily progress; gradually Fred built a kind of scaffolding around the tree, from top to bottom, which served as a ladder. Perhaps recalling the legend of Jack and the Beanstalk, he built an armchair at the very top of the tree from which he could enjoy the spectacular view of Clayoquot Sound.

Fred climbed the tree, as he put it, to "get away from it all." He took panoramic photographs from the tree for his family back in England. In fine weather he wrote letters and played his cornet from there. Every morning at 8 a.m. he played "Come to the Cookhouse Door, Boys" from his platform.

Still not satisfied, Fred built a four-floor castle complete with crenellated battlements in the Medieval manner. He painted it white with red and blue trim — good Imperial colours. "He was always ordering stuff, buying all that lumber for the castle," a friend recalled. For this purpose he bought a gas launch named *Agnes*.

He landscaped the rocky castle ground with rose trellises. Beneath the castle windows he dug a well, and at one side of his garden he built a love seat. On a rock he painted the words "DREAMISLE." He used dynamite to blow up the large stumps and prepare the ground for landscaping.

Castles, of course, are for entertainment, and Fred acquired a piano as well as a fine collection of phonograph records with which he would entertain his friends at evening concerts. One of his favourite songs was "A Perfect Day." He would say, "I want you young people to come on such and such a night to hear my new records." "He'd make cocoa for everybody and light a fire," another friend recalled' "And then he'd play the gramophone." He once alarmed his guests by saying "I wouldn't bang my feet against that box if I were you — there is dynamite in it."

Fred also wrote poetry which he read at gatherings or displayed on the notice board at Dawley's store. The only one to have survived is a 150-line epic entitled "When Noah Entered the Ark," an account of the mayhem that might have occurred when so many different animals were thrown together in the Ark. It reads in part:

For the cat would swear
In the face of the bear,
The wolf would leap
At the helpless sheep,
The tiger claw
At the panther's jaw,
And the serpent twine
Round the Roebuck's spine.

Fred was interested in several young women in Tofino. One recalled "Oh, he tried all of us, all the different girls." Another stated that "He fell in love with two girls, but he didn't really know them very well."

The first was Alma Arnet, daughter of Jacob Arnet, a Norwegian fisherman who worked in 1912 and 1913 at the Kennedy Lake Hatchery during the spawning season. Fred probably met Alma at this time if not earlier.

Alma was very young before the First World War; she was born in 1897. "Alma and I were friends," Olive Garrard recalled, "and we were both under age." It is likely that Fred proposed to Alma before he joined up in May 1917. When asked in the late 1970s "Was he a confirmed bachelor?" Alma replied, "No, I'm sure he wanted to get married." When asked, "Did he ask anyone?" she replied, "I'm not going to say one way or the other."

Fred's second flame was Olive Garrard, the daughter of the English-born lighthouse keeper. Two of Olive's brothers worked at the hatchery with Fred. Olive recalled in 1970 that "He used to come to the house to chat with mother about England." Her sister Edith added "He was really coming to see Olive."

Alma and Olive were very much on Fred's mind when he decided to join up in May 1917. Before he went overseas in July he put shutters on his castle windows and painted a princess on them; according to his friend Ken Gibson, "The only thing missing was a princess in the tower, so he painted a beautiful picture of this princess and put her in the window that faces to the west." On another of the windows he painted the likeness of Olive Garrard.

Fred's affection for Alma and Olive is borne out in his extraordinary will, dated 2 July 1917. "I give, devise and bequeath unto Miss Alma Arnet . . . Tibbs Island (because she's the nicest girl I ever met and another reason she knows) and everything thereon excepting the house and ten feet of land on either side." Fred had other plans for the house itself: "The house and contents thereof, except the gramophone, go to Miss Olive G. Garrard of Tofino B.C. (because it was built

British Columbia Archives

The rugged shore of Fred's island with his painted "Dreamisle" sign.

for her) so long as she remains single. In case of her marrying, house goes to Miss Alma Arnet if she is still single."

But Fred did not die; at least not yet. He joined the Canadian Forestry Corps and went to war as a private. He worked on railway construction on the front lines and as a bugler.

He received an honourable discharge at Victoria in May 1919, and was awarded the Victory and British War medals for his war service. According to one friend, "He never spoke of what he had been doing or what he had seen, but judging from the look on his features, it was quite evident that he had experienced much pain and sorrow." Many newcomers to Tofino thought, mistakenly, that his disfigured face was the result of a war wound.

In the summer of 1919 Fred, now aged thirty-three, returned to his castle and to his romantic endeavours. He switched his attention to Winnie Dixson, the daughter of Dr. Douglas Dixson of Tofino. Dr. Dixson had left his medical practice in Edinburgh because of his wife's poor health; they arrived in Tofino in 1912. Like Fred, Winnie had taken a farm-training course before leaving Britain.

In the 1970s Winnie Dixson recalled Fred's attempt to court her. "He'd come over and sit down and talk with Father and Mother. I took a book and went upstairs if there were too many young men around . . . I didn't have much interest. I didn't have time. I had about 300 chickens." One of Winnie's friends, however, recalled that "He wanted to marry Winnie Dixson, but her parents wouldn't let her marry anyone" owing to her weak heart and lungs.

Fortunately a few of Fred's letters to his young English niece, Julia Tibbs ("Cis", "Cissywiss") have survived and they suggest the extent of Fred's isolation and loneliness in the last year and a half of his life.

November 12th/19

My dear little Cis,

What a skunk of an uncle to let his poor little kiddo keep writing nice things to him and never answering for months at a stretch. But as the merciful man is merciful to his beast, so you must be merciful & full of forgiveness towards your beast of an uncle. . . .

I doubt me much if you have any idea as to where this is being written. It's in a most weird and strange place to write letters:

I have a block of wood (cedar) on a bridge that crosses a tributary of a big mud flat that is now dry, the tide being out; on the block I have a little hand case made for packing a thermos flask & a small box of food; that is my desk, & I am sitting on another block of cedar that is resting on a log that runs under the bridge. This is my seat.

The day is gray & cheerless & cool, but without wind or rain so far. The view is one that I do not think you would consider pretty, as immense a contrast from what you are looking at daily as it is possible to imagine, and nothing to compare to my view from the island.

Perhaps you think of a wet day, but this is just the same, always something to do on this establishment, turning a wild, rugged bit of forest into a little patch of England: that's my proposition, & it's beginning to look like it now; maybe some day when you are grown up big, or Jack or some of you may come out to Canada & then you can see the effect of your uncle's desperate efforts, that caused such a dearth of letters.

In fact if your rottenest uncle doesn't get married it may be your island some day if other things don't turn up to make him think otherwise but there may be a stipulation that you must come out & see it if that happens. . . .

Uncle Fred.

British Columbia Archives

The view from the Stubbs Island sandspit, 1922, a year after Fred died on the sandy beach in the foreground. Lone Cone on Meares Island is seen beyond with its head in the clouds.

Fred spent his last year working on his castle and at the hatchery, wooing Winnie Dixson, and tending the buoys in Clayoquot Sound. He spent Christmas 1920 as a guest of the Dixsons. His last surviving letter is dated 15 January 1921, and it indicates that Fred had developed a dangerous passion for dynamite.

My dear little Cissywiss,

No! Your far-flung uncle hadn't the slightest notion that you were going to evening classes at Southend. How do you get there, Bicycle or train? I suppose you like this, and now I have a futuristic vision of you being somebody's stenographer or something like that. . . .

Speaking for ourselves we keep on plugging away, always doing something, but the days are short, and wet. . . .

On New Year's Eve I had a rig prepared at the top of my tree ladder rig, that was going to blow the old year to the four winds, but the weather was so rotten had to postpone it until last Monday, when altho' it was quite scenic it failed to explode as it was frozen. It doesn't take much to freeze dynamite. I also made a hot air balloon, but the blighter caught fire just as it started off. Had the fire too low down. First try attempt, try again, sometime. . . .

See this sheet is about full, must wish you all manner of good health and peace of mind, for the year we've now waded into and heaps, and hills and hoards of love, and no end of these imaginary kisses. . . .

Fred

As it happened this was one of the last letters Fred would write to anyone. He died in July 1921, aged thirty-five, as a result of a particularly violent and unfortunate chain of events.

On 1 July 1921 he took a group of friends up to the hatchery in his motor-launch for the Dominion Day picnic. "We spent a really wonderful day up there," a friend recalled. Shortly afterwards, when blasting some rock on his island, he accidentally "powdered" himself with dynamite. Though badly shaken, he nonetheless went out on the morning of 3 July to check the harbour lights.

On 4 July the Clayoquot Hotel burned down. With a large group of men Fred stayed up most of the night trying to prevent the fire from spreading.

In the early hours of 5 July, after a very short sleep, Fred went out to maintain the harbour lights, a job he did every second day in his skiff. These were platform buoys, flat wooden floats supporting a tripod at the top of which was a coal oil lamp protected from the wind by a glass casing. Fred's job was to replace the old lamp with a new one containing enough oil to last for forty-eight hours.

All went well until Fred reached the lightbuoy on the Stubbs Island sandbank. Here, Fred pulled his

skiff up on the platform. While he worked on the light his skiff worked itself free and drifted away. When he realized he was without a boat, Fred was faced with his first big choice: he could stay on the buoy and wait for a boat to pass, or he could swim after the skiff. He decided to swim: he was strong in the water, and used to swim between his island and Tofino for exercise. Before doing so he finished changing the lamp.

He took off his clothes and hung them on the railings of the buoy and dived in the water after his skiff. But moments later an Indian from Opitsat came along in his motor launch and, seeing Fred's skiff floating unoccupied in the water, towed it to Opitsat. He did not see Fred swimming toward him in the water, and he did not hear Fred's shouts over the noise of his engine.

Fred now had a second choice. He could return to the buoy or he could try to swim the mile to Stubbs Island. He decided to swim to the island. Half way there he reached an exposed rock. While standing there naked he saw some Indian women digging clams on the Stubbs Island spit. Winnie Dixson described what happened next:

> There was a rock and he was exhausted. I know he tried to get some Indian women to bring a canoe. They were digging clams out on the spit. They said that he shouted to them but they didn't know what he was saying. They didn't understand English and he didn't talk the Indian language. What they should have done was to have gone back down and told the policeman and he would have got a boat and gone up and picked him up, but he had to swim the last part, to the island.

While standing on the rock Fred had also been seen by a Japanese fisherman who promptly notified Clarence Dawley back at the store. Clarence got out of bed, got dressed, and headed for the end of the spit. Meanwhile Fred had returned to the frigid waters of Clayoquot Sound.

Between the rock and the spit he faced his last great ordeal: a field of seaweed which at low tide lay flat on the water. Somehow he made it through the seaweed bed and crawled onto the spit where he collapsed from exhaustion, naked in the sand.

Shortly afterwards Clarence Dawley and the Japanese fisherman found Fred lifeless on the beach. They fetched Dr. Dixson who frantically tried to revive him, without success. Later that day the Clayoquot policeman sent a telegram to his superiors in Victoria: "Frederick Gerald Tibbs found exhausted on beach at Clayoquot by Jap fisherman early this morning. Two hours artificial respiration failed to revive him. Body now at Clayoquot. Wire instructions."

Fred's death had an immediate effect. The words "Tibbs is drowned!" flew around Tofino. The women he had pursued were all affected by his death. It was Winnie Dixson's father who tried to revive Fred. Fate's cruelest joke was that Fred had neglected to draw up a new will after his return from the war, with the result that the 1917 document was legally binding. This meant that Olive Garrard and Alma Arnet inherited the island and the castle.

The 1917 will, however, also stipulated that Fred's English relations were to inherit a lifetime interest in his various other investments, which were valued at around $4,000. On their death, he wrote in his will, his estate was "To be used solely & absolutely in the cause of Christ either in feeding or clothing the destitute or needy, or by donation to some society or persons, preaching the pure teaching of Christ for the winning of souls to Him." Accordingly, in 1962 Fred's sister willed the estate to the London City Mission.

Fred never did finish his castle, and he never did find his princess. Nonetheless he is now a legend in Tofino; and long after more eminent people in Canadian business and politics have been completely forgotten, Fred is with us still. This is a result of his eccentricity, his utter transparency, and the honesty that shines through his letters seventy years after they were written. He seems as exposed and naked in his letters and actions as he was at the awful moment of his death. ♦

Richard Mackie is a graduate student in the history department at the University of British Columbia. *He wishes to thank Chris and Jo Doman and Virginia Careless for their help with this article.*

The Lost Boys

There's a race of men that don't fit in,
A race that can't stay still;
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,
And they roam the world at will.
They range the field and they rove the flood,
And they climb the mountain's crest;
Theirs is the curse of the gipsy blood,
And they don't know how to rest.

— From "Songs of a Sourdough"
By Robert W. Service

(Used with permission)

From the Old Sod

By Anne Morton

IRISH EMIGRATION AND CANADIAN SETTLEMENT
Patterns, Links and Letters

By Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990. ix, 370 pp., illus. $48.00.

FLIGHT FROM FAMINE
The Coming of The Irish to Canada

By Donald MacKay. McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1990. 368 pp., illus. $29.95.

TIMOTHY EATON AND THE RISE OF HIS DEPARTMENT STORE

By Joy L. Santink. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1990. xii, 319 pp., illus. $35.00.

Perhaps we would not be having such a hard time imagining a future for our country if we did not believe such stupid things about its past. The virtue of the three books reviewed here is that they give us the chance to be a bit more intelligent about one of our founding peoples, the Irish.

At the time of Confederation the Irish outnumbered the English and the Scots two to one. After the French, they were the new country's second largest national group. Yet they have somehow been remembered only as small-part players in one of our favourite myths.

In Mordecai Richler's deservedly best-selling novel *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, there is a character called Tim Callaghan, who is a composite of every Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood cliché about the Irish, Bing Crosby in a Roman collar excepted.

Timothy Eaton: Irish boy makes good

He it is who gives that by now famous speech about Canadian history and the effect that our understanding of it (warped) has had on our national character (horrendous). It begins: "Canada is not so much a country as a holding-tank filled with the disgruntled progeny of defeated peoples. French-Canadians consumed by self-pity; the descendants of Scots who fled the Duke of Cumberland; Irish the famine; and Jews the Black Hundreds."

If you can believe this about Canada's Irish after reading *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement*, you can, in the words of that great Irishman the Duke of Wellington, believe anything. Using the tools of historical geography, Houston and Smyth tell us about the Irish who came and settled in Canada, especially in the peak period of Irish migration which lasted from 1815 to 1855. They tell us who they were, why they came, where they came from and where they went. The great famine of the 1840s is presented as an episode, albeit a significant one, in a complex historical pattern. Oddly enough, part of the significance of the famine was that it ultimately resulted in turning the Irish towards the United States.

The Irish chose to leave Ireland for a variety of reasons. Actual and potential famine as well as sectarian terrorism were certainly among them. Many of them came, however, because of the high birth rate of the 1790s, coupled with the decline of the economy at the end of the Napoleonic Wars and a system of land inheritance which meant trying to scratch out a living on plots of land which became increasingly and impossibly smaller. One of the factors in the decision of many Ulster farmers to emigrate was the advancing industrialization of linen production, as a result of which they could no longer eke out their incomes by home-weaving. Protestants, who had a little more money than their Catholic compatriots and more of a tradition of leaving one's native land to seek a better life elsewhere, were over-represented in Irish emigration to Canada — a quarter of Ireland's population was Protestant, while about half of Canada's Irish were.

What part of Canada the Irish settled in was often determined by what part of Ireland they came from. Their regional ports had established trading links with different areas in Canada as Derry, for example, had done with New Brunswick. When an Irish family set off for the New World they were likely to end up in the outward ports of call of their local traders. Letters home then encouraged friends and relatives to try their chances in a Canadian community where they could be sure of living with people with shared memories of their own corner of dear old Ireland.

Works of historical geography are not usually considered a treat, unless by other historical geographers. This

one is. Its authors take a lively and sensitive interest in the immigrant experience and in individual lives. They point out, for example, that in their letters the immigrants often seem more interested in the deaths than in the births back home because deaths meant a change in the Ireland of their memory while the babies would grow up in an Ireland they would never see. The last section of the book, "Lives and Letters", presents three collections of letters home which give some of Canada's Irish the chance to speak for themselves. (And the word "speak" is used advisedly. Nathaniel Carrothers writes of "eighting and drinking" and "grain all trashed by mashenery.")

Houston and Smyth are both Irish-born (Smyth now lives in Ireland after some years teaching in Toronto) and their national origin is probably what makes their book unusually heartfelt for an academic work. They have mustered their pie-charts and graphs and Ordnance Survey maps, their stories and letters and photographs, their readings in the new but flourishing field of Irish studies in Canada, in order to demolish the "unquestioning and simple image [of the Irish] as unskilled, impoverished refugees. . ." They do not replace this image with another equally simple one. Instead, they set the Irish free from stereotypes by demonstrating how varied the Irish experience in Canada was.

The title of Donald MacKay's book, *Flight From Famine*, might suggest that he plunges us right back into the stereotypical. While MacKay has decided to emphasize the Catholic Irish rather than the Protestant and to play up those aspects of Irish history and the history of the Irish in Canada which Houston and Smyth tend to play down (the grim, distressing ones, in other words), his book is nonetheless wide-ranging and fair-minded.

MacKay is a professional writer who specializes in Canadian history and the skill with which he marshals his reading and research into a fluently-written and easy to read book is admirable. It is inevitable that in the bounty of facts MacKay gives us there should be some errors and I feel a pious obligation to correct one of them. Charles Rubidge, who is accorded by MacKay the credit he deserves for his role in the emigration schemes of Peter Robinson and Colonel Wyndham, was a great-great-great-grandfather of mine. I was startled to learn that he "lost a leg fighting under Nelson at Trafalgar," when, according to his own account of his life (which there is no reason for MacKay to have sought out) he was not at Trafalgar and ended his naval career two-legged, if lame.

Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store is not really a book about the Irish in Canada. It is a business history, and a very good one too, which can be recommended to anyone interested in the beginnings of modern retailing and/or the early days of a national institution. But Joy Santink's book deserves a mention here because Timothy Eaton is Canada's best-known Irishman or at least would be if we knew he was Irish.

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Like other famous businessmen of Irish origin, such as James Richardson and John Labatt, Timothy Eaton is no longer remembered as an Irishman. Houston and Smyth begin their book by using him as a poignant symbol of Canada's neglect of its Irish heritage: "Timothy's bronze statue in the Eaton Co.'s main department store in downtown Toronto has been moved from a ground floor entrance to a nook on the fourth floor and the right foot is again tarnished, no longer rubbed in reverence by grateful Irish immigrants."

Santink is interested in Timothy Eaton's personality because it was a major factor in the success of his business. His character comes across as simple, clear, even harsh, in outline. This may be because of the lack of surviving personal material. He did, after all, convert from Presbyterianism to Methodism, usually considered one of the less chilly forms of Christianity, and could write movingly of the death of one of his children, "the cloud seems to hang heavily. We are endeavouring to trust in God." It may also be because, as the ninth and posthumous child of a small farmer in Co. Antrim, he felt the need for a *persona* that would armour him in his combat with the world. He once wrote in his notebook "If almost Starved depend upon yourself and not upon others." Devout, combative, ferociously devoted to hard work and self-reliance, Timothy Eaton can seem something of an old chap from the old sod, a caricature of a son of Ulster. Yet Santink has an evident sympathy for him which many of her readers should come to share.

The majority of Canada's Irish created lives for themselves somewhere between the spectacular success of Timothy Eaton and the hopeless suffering of the famine refugees who died at the quarantine station of Grosse Ile. They found in Canada a land where there was work for those who wanted it and where the rewards of hard work went to the worker and not the landlord. They could throw off the habit of deference and dependence which Irish society inculcated. They could

realize the modest and very Irish ambition of living like "decent" people.

This may not seem like much but it meant a lot to them. Nathaniel Carrothers, an Upper Canadian farmer, wrote home to his brother William in Co. Fermanagh in 1853: "I ame sure your children woud ever bless the day that the [*sic*] came to Canady: I never was sorry for comming, but ever shall be that I spent so many of my dayes in Ireland." Michael Byrne, from Boughill, Co. Galway, who got a job building the Grand Trunk Railway for "five shillings a day in your Irish money," wrote that "instead of being chained with poverty in Boughill I am crowned with glory and I am better pleased to come to this country than if you bestowed me five acres of land in Boughill."

What they were not was victims. They came to Canada to make a future different from their past and this is what victims cannot do. To be a victim is to be denied the right to tell your own story. And to choose to be a victim is to abandon the effort and responsibility of telling your own story, of imagining and achieving your own future. If Canadians really want to see ourselves as victims, at least let us refrain from betraying our ancestors by believing nonsense about them and then using the nonsense as a justification for our betrayal.

Anne Morton is an archivist with the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and a descendant of the Halls and D'Oliers, Irish emigrants to Peterborough County.

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Northern Journey

By Richard Harrington

ACROSS THE KEEWATIN ICE FIELDS
Three Years Among the Canadian Eskimos, 1913-1916

By Christian Leden. Edited and with an Introduction by Shirlee Anne Smith. Translation by Leslie Neatby. Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., Winnipeg, 1990. 298 pp. illus. $35.00 (hardcover), $17.00 (paper).

This book is a remarkable discovery. The author, a Norwegian, wrote this account after his stay in the Canadian Arctic from 1913 to 1916. It was published in German in 1927.

Now, over 60 years later, we can finally read about his experiences. I wonder why this remarkable account had to wait so long for the world to read it in English?

On his 31st birthday, 17 July 1913, Leden boarded the M.S. *Nascopie* in Montreal, Quebec, on his way to Churchill, Manitoba.

He was no novice to arctic life having lived in Greenland before. His interests were in anthropology, ethnology and musicology.

The observant author came to the Arctic prepared with a great deal of equipment including pemmican, skis, "stinker" matches, movie and still photography gear, scientific instruments and a double tent in which he also planned to develop film. Among the unique items we read that he carried "lumiere farbenplatten" — an early colour film. Unfortunately, none are reproduced, but the book has about 29 black and white reproductions (not all his own). There is a studio portrait of Leden in his caribou clothes on the cover of the book. Another unusual item that he brought along was a gramophone with wax cylinders and he actually recorded Eskimo songs. The book also contains a whole appendix on the music scores of several chants. He comments amusingly that white people did not appreciate his music recordings of native chants, but, he says, the natives did not like his wax cylinder music of Wagner either.

His trip did not start well. In the small sailboat he had chartered to go up the west coast of Hudson Bay they encountered many storms and were eventually wrecked, fortunately without loss of life, but a great deal of gear was lost.

In translation, his prose reads well and realistically. At times he can be poetic.

A journal entry of 9 October (page 76) describes his hardships caused by the wreck, then goes on to 11 October (page 79) with more description of the same. On page 82, he returns to 9 October. If not an error in editing, I would not be surprised at Leden being confused — he went through gruelling days.

The book includes a map of remarkable detail showing the author's journeys. The place names are in German. There are several blank areas marked *"Unbekannt"* (unknown) and in these areas the author visited.

In Part I, Leden goes into daily detail of his encounters and impressions. In Part II, the accounts become much more condensed, in

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fact, he skips from January, 1914, to February, 1915. The latter part seems to be excerpted from his journals.

Leden's translation of what hunter Kallaschak tells him of killing polar bears seems a bit fanciful, but basically true. Still, the author must have been a remarkable individual to live successfully with such hardy people as the Eskimo.

His sojourn in the Arctic was not without real hardships, dangers and even narrow escapes. There is a vivid description of his struggles crossing Chesterfield Inlet in early December that must be read to be appreciated. Some chapters deal with his perilous crossing to Southampton Island. There is also a story of cannibalism related to him. However, one wonders what the author did during the lengthy periods for which there are no entries.

On page 172, Leden says in a few years this splendid primitive people will be thoroughly spoilt. During the summer of 1990 this reviewer visited with Inuit friends in Rankin Inlet and Arviat (Eskimo Point). They not only live in cosy modern houses with wall to wall carpet, but they have skidoos and heavy terrain vehicles, television with satellite reception, VCR sets and microwave ovens (his friend's wife, mother of eight children, served veal cutlets). Not only are there telephones in every home, but they are the cellular type. There are fax machines in schools and offices. An illicit drug trade also exists and AIDS is not unknown. All this happened in a remarkably short span of time.

Congratulations should go to all who worked so diligently to bring this book to our attention. It makes fine reading.

Celebrated photographer and Northern traveller Richard Harrington has been a longtime contributor to "The Beaver", his first contribution appearing in the issue for March 1947.

Toronto of Old

By Peter Carver

THE TORONTO STORY

By Claire Mackay, illustrations by Johnny Wales. Annick Press, Toronto, 1990. 112 pp. $24.95 (paper), $34.95 (cloth).

Claire Mackay is first of all a novelist, a storyteller fascinated by Toronto, the city where she was born and still lives. Here in one example of the hundreds of stories in her new book:

It is the first year of the nineteenth century, when an Irish tailor named Humphrey Sullivan goes on a drinking spree in York with a pal nicknamed Latin Mike. In the course of their revels Humphrey runs out of cash and pays for a glass of whisky with a forged cheque for the equivalent of 90 cents. Caught, jailed, tried, and convicted, the unfortunate Humphrey is sentenced to death. He is the first man to be hanged in the history of York — though another Irish prisoner who has been hired to perform the execution botches the job twice before finally succeeding on the third try.

In the cell adjoining Humphrey's in the town's tiny new jail is John Small, clerk of the Executive Council, who has just shot the colony's attorney general in a duel. Though the evidence against him is clear, John Small is acquitted of the charge of murder and goes free.

Thus, justice in the town of York in the year 1800.

The anecdote is characteristic of this highly readable history which should appeal to any reader who has lived or worked in Toronto, or who is in any way interested in the city. The book illuminates the story of the growth of a tiny trading post into a crowded modern metropolis.

These days parents and educators puzzle over the problem of getting kids to learn history. Too many bright students in elementary and secondary schools regard the study of history as a tedious bore, a dull recital of events having little to do with their lives. Claire Mackay's story of her city from the last Ice Age to 1990 is a powerful antidote to that assumption. It has been published to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Annick Press — one of the great success stories in Canadian children's publishing — and in anticipation of the 200th anniversary of permanent European settlement on the site of Toronto. It is a book full of vivid portraits — from Simcoe to Sewell, from William Lyon Mackenzie to Nathan Phillips — and irreverent insights (Toronto the Good has always had more taverns than churches). It is history which connects past to present in a wonderfully entertaining fashion. While kids will enjoy discovering the origins of street names and local traditions, adults will find this a refreshing look at the story of a city whose colours are too often, and undeservedly, painted in shades of grey.

Claire Mackay would be the last to deny that this is history with a point of view. The juxtaposing of Humphrey Sullivan and John Small

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is no accident. The author delights in her quick sketch of Sir Francis Bond Head ("Bone Head" to generations of school children) who "did some truly stupid things" during his disastrous two years as Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. William Lyon Mackenzie, who frequently threw his red wig when "overtaken by strong feeling", emerges not exactly as a hero but certainly as a vibrant personality.

One of Mackay's genuine heroes is a newspaper proprietor of the 1830s who ralied against the pile-up of garbage in the streets, and the dumping of dead animals and manure on the ice of Toronto Bay. Francis Collins went to jail twice for libel, but was not silenced. He prodded York's first medical officer to clean up the town — literally — of "stagnant pools of water, green as a leek, and emitting deadly exhalations". Prophetically, he warned of "the state of the Bay, from which a large portion of the inhabitants are supplied with water". Collins kept up his campaign and, ironically, perished in the cholera epidemic which swept through the town in 1834.

Another fascinating sidebar spotlights the role played in the city's history by the original kids of De Grassi. These were Cornelia and Charlotte, teen-aged daughters of an Italian-born British army officer who came to Canada in 1831. As Mackenzie's forces gathered at the tavern owned by John Montgomery north of the city, Cornelia offered to spy on the rebels for Sir Francis Bond Head — an offer which was accepted. Meanwhile Charlotte was shot at by rebels as she made her way home to the family farm northeast of the city.

Due respect is paid to the founder of York, John Graves Simcoe, who arrived with his wife and three young children in 1793. It was Simcoe who ordered the seat of government moved from Kingston to the tiny settlement on the shores of the great lakes, an order which guaranteed the outpost its place in history. And it was Elizabeth Simcoe who faithfully recorded in her diaries and paintings the three years she and her husband spent in the colony, for a time in a tent pitched near the site of the Canadian National Exhibition.

The Simcoe's role was undeniable. But Mackay has a lot to say about another early arrival, whose name is not so well-known.

Simcoe persuaded a Vienna-born artist and adventurer named William Berczy to take on the job of clearing a wagon road north from the lake — the route which became known as Yonge Street. Berczy arrived in town with a group of energetic German settlers who were instrumental in clearing the townsite. Berczy himself designed many of the town's landmarks — the first bridge over the Don River, St. James church, and the homes of some of the early settlers. But hard times came. Famine hit the community. Berczy and his crew got malaria and missed the deadline for completion of Yonge Street. Simcoe refused to give the project more time, took back Berczy's land, and Berczy left town in disgrace. Today it is Simcoe's name which is plastered all over the map of Toronto and Ontario; yet, without the labour of Berczy (whose name was given to a small downtown park in 1975), the settlement might never have survived.

Mackay celebrates the achievements of the prominent — John Strachan, Timothy Eaton, Egerton Ryerson, Frederick Banting, Glenn Gould, Marilyn Bell — but also delights in the obscure — Old Tom, janitor of York's first hospital; Joe Shuster, who created the *Superman* comic strip at the age of 17, but sold his rights to it for a measly $130; Elizabeth McMaster, who first set up what would become the Hospital for Sick Children but was elbowed out of the organization by rich businessman John Ross Robertson.

She notes the city's catastrophes — the great fires of 1849 and 1904, the storm of 1858 which formed Toronto Island, the big snow of 1944, Hurricane Hazel in 1954 — and its oddities — Henry Pellatt's Casa Loma, The famous Diving Horse of Hanlan's Point, Edwin Boyd's jail break (under the heading "Boyds

The Simcoes at Castle Frank: A temple in the wilderness. From "The Toronto Story".

Fly Coop"), Babe Ruth's first home run, the fight over Sunday streetcars.

One of the most attractive aspects of this generously proportioned book is the contribution of illustrator Johnny Wales, descendant of two of the German settlers who came to York with William Berczy. In addition to his numerous witty illustrations throughout the text, Wales punctuates the narrative with eight double-page, full-colour bird's-eye watercolours of the site of the Gooderham building at the corner of Church and Wellington streets — from 1500 to the present day. It is an engaging visual tracking of the city's development.

Knowledgeable readers will enjoy assessing Mackay's exhaustive research against their own experience (what *were* the best rides at Sunnyside, the earliest radio programs of the thirties?). Youngsters will find signposts for absorbing further reading in Mackay's periodic references to works by well-known children's writers who tell their own fictional tales of the city's history. All will want to pore over the detailed time lines at the end of the book. Few will fail to be delighted by the story of a city flavoured with plenty of spice and wit.

Peter Carver is a Toronto editorial consultant with a special interest in books for young people.

Playing With Winter

By Tom Saunders

WINTER SPORTS IN THE WEST
Edited by E.A. Corbet and A.W. Rasporich. The Historical Society of Alberta, Calgary, 1990. 149 pp., illus. $11.95.

There are many spin-offs, monetary and otherwise, that can accrue to a city which hosts the Summer or Winter Olympics. There are exceptions to this, of course, the most recent example being the city of Montreal which, along with the rest of Canada, lost a bundle on the Summer Olympics of 1976.

Good management, however, especially in the modern era of television, usually means a profit. In addition to TV revenue, there is a financial spin-off through the business that comes to the merchants, hotels, etcetera, of the host city. Add to that the new or improved sports facilities that are a legacy of the Games, plus the publicity received, and it becomes obvious why many cities vie for the honour (and headaches) that accompany the staging of the Games.

All these factors came into play when the city of Calgary bid for, and secured, the Winter Olympics of 1988. And the anticipated spin-offs were there. The Games were a success and, both financially and in terms of publicity, the city of Calgary was the beneficiary.

But the Calgary Games brought spin-offs other than the obvious ones mentioned above. Among them is this book. In 1987 the Historical Society of Alberta, which was incorporated by an act of the then new provincial legislature in 1907, was due to celebrate its eightieth birthday; and the membership got the idea of capitalizing on this as it looked to the Winter Olympics of the following year. They wanted to have a share in the Olympic experience and felt that, for their organization, there was no better way to do this than to look at the history of winter sports in Western Canada. They found a willing partner in the History Department of the University of Calgary, and it was agreed to hold a conference that would include athletes and historians to present papers and share views. *Winter Sports in the West* gives us a sampling of some of the papers which were presented.

The organizers of the conference are to be commended on the variety of subjects dealt with and the calibre of people they secured to present papers. They range all the way from Greg Thomas of the Canadian Parks Service to Fraser Pakes, Director of Education for the Stoney Indian Tribe; from Jorgen Dahlie, Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, to Morris Mott, ex-hockey player and now Professor of History at Brandon University.

Winter Sports in the West is not, of course, a detailed and comprehensive treatment of the subject dealt with, nor is it a full account of all the papers that were given or of all that transpired at the meetings; but it is an excellent overview which is important not only in what it contains but in what it suggests.

It starts with a consideration of games that were endemic to the native population before the coming of white traders and settlers, and discusses how games of the one culture affected the other. Since Sports History attempts to place sports and the use of leisure time in their social, economic and technological settings, a study of this interrelationship is important not only in dealing with the era of the white man's first contact with the aboriginal peoples, but all through the development of sports history in the Canadian West; and, in reading the papers included in this book, we are never allowed to forget it.

We are made aware, for example, that while, outside of Winnipeg, the population of the prairies prior to 1945 was mainly rural, nevertheless we have the phenomenon, between 1920 and 1927, of comparatively small centres like Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton supporting professional hockey teams and, long before the era of women's lib, the Edmonton Grads womens' basketball team dominat-

ing that sport, not only nationally but internationally, from the mid-twenties to 1940.

In contrast to the current feminist fashion in dealing with women in sport, incidentally, Elaine Chalus, who presented the paper on the Grads, opts for what she calls an "integrationist" approach. She states that the Grads whom she interviewed "believed that prior to World War II, women had a special position in society simply because they were women, and that the move away from this concept of womanhood has cost women both status and respect." She will undoubtedly find some feminist opposition to her views on this matter, but it is indicative of the attempt to see sport not just as something in itself but as a product and reflection of the social milieu which is its setting in any particular time and place.

Making the same type of emphasis is the consideration given to the growth of professionalism in sport and the realization that some winter sports (basketball and badminton for example) which take place indoors are not truly winter sports at all, since they are independent of the weather. The growth of professionalism has got to the place where society accepts the fact that even our best amateurs are professionals (consider Ben Johnson who, despite losing his gold medal in the last Summer Olympics because of the use of steroids, still does very well financially through endorsements, etcetera) and the fact that modern technology has arrived at the point where professional sport is no longer guided by seasons but by schedules.

Professional sport is being "packaged" today, so that we can have curling bonspiels in summer and indoor track meets in winter, and the spectacle of baseball, hockey and basketball all vying for the entertainment dollar simultaneously each May and October. As Carl Betke points out in his paper, "Winter Sports in the Early Urban Environment of Prairie Canada", perhaps the beginning of this "packaging" was the sale of the entire galaxy of prairie and Pacific coast professional hockey teams to American interests in 1927, made possible through the development of artificial ice.

The Edmonton Grads: Queens of the courts. From "Winter Sports in the West".

And so our illustrations might run. The tenor of this book is that sport does not exist in a vacuum. It is affected by the mores of the society of which it is a part and, in turn, affects those mores. And it is affected by other factors as well. The coming of the white man to Western Canada affected sport that had previously been entirely native in character; the development of urban centres brought a new element into what had been an almost wholly rural economy; modern means of transportation and communication made possible sports events and schedules which earlier ages would have considered impossible; and new class and gender views have had a broadening effect on the body politic, and therefore on the sports spectrum. In a word, as society has changed, sport has changed with it, according to what the populace wanted or would tolerate.

These papers also raise, and endeavour to answer, the question of why some sports (snowshoeing and tobogganing, for example) die out while others, like ski-ing, rise to take their place. (Was snowshoeing for simpler and less affluent times, with ski-ing one of the symptoms of the affluent society? Or is it that ski-ing is more universally accepted and provides participants with a greater thrill and, for the more expert, keener competition?)

The papers included in *Winter Sports in the West* do not detail all of these matters, but they point the way toward their consideration. For this reason, they deserve to be read. Anyone interested in sport — particularly the history of sport in the Canadian West — will find this book both thought-provoking and enjoyable reading.

Tom Saunders is a Winnipeg poet and sports fan.

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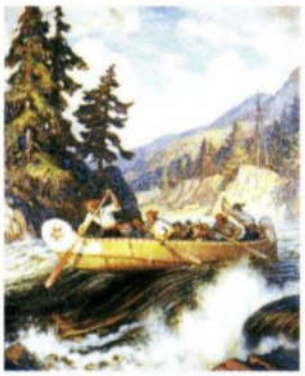
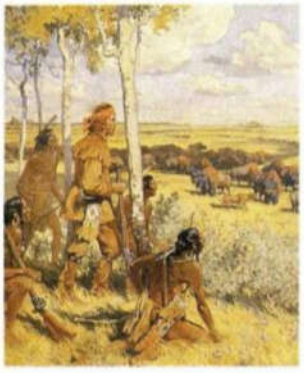
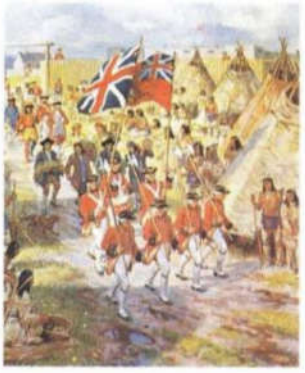


A. *Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.



D. *Trading Ceremony At York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.

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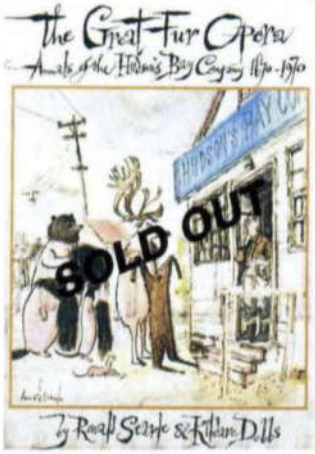

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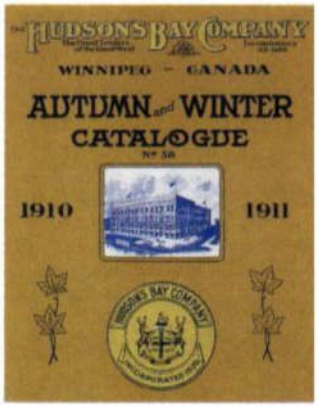

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Pete Loudon: Japan's Balloon Bombers

I have a blank piece of white paper that contains a story. I thought it was lost but it popped up when I was sifting through an old trunk and it reminded me how Canada's West Coast was threatened with its own holocaust in 1945.

The fragment of heavy coarse paper took me back to a tiny naval base at Comox, B.C., officially named HMCS Givenchy III but known to many who served there as HMCS Hurry-and-Wait.

The base was built on the end of a sandspit that curves into Comox Bay like a one finger salute. It had been used during World War I to train soldiers and soon after the start of World War II new-entry sailors trained there. By 1945, with the war in Europe ending, Givenchy III had a special job, training both sailors and soldiers to hit the beaches of the Japanese homeland. None of us knew that atom bombs were soon going to make it all unnecessary.

Most of us who were staffing the base had already done our time in the North Atlantic or in the case of the seamen and motor mechanics who abounded, in the D-Day and Mediterranean landings. Many wore the Combined Ops badge, as did my buddy Bill Hanley. He ran the gas engines that drove the landing barges, dumping the trainees in the shallows while gunnery ratings used live ammo to teach all concerned to keep their heads down and our salty CO, Commander Guy Windeyer, roared encouragement.

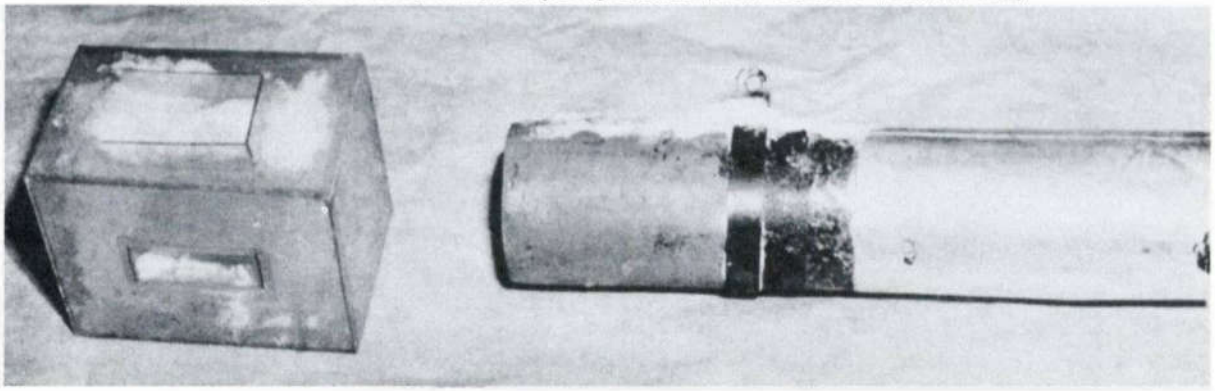
But after what the instructional crew and base staff had been through in the European war, the base was a lark usually — weekend leaves to Vancouver, wives and children of many ratings living at Comox so Daddy could get home at night. There was a minimum of routine between each draft of trainees and many sunny days were spent loafing in the dense broom near the base with a case of beer collected at the back door of the canteen. If you were needed someone would call on the loud hailer.

It was no wonder that half the base volunteered for the job when it was announced that a strange new Japanese weapon had been located on nearby Hornby Island. I was an LSA — a storekeeper — but I could have wrangled my way on the landing barge only there was no room when all the brass, even the Medical Officer, crowded aboard.

Bill told me about it the next day. He said they had found a balloon about 10 metres in diameter. Suspended from it was a round chandelier and suspended from it were a number of incendiary bombs. I think it was all packed off to Victoria and the find was to be a secret. But Bill had torn a few pieces from the balloon and brought me one. The next thing we knew VE-Day was upon us, then the atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, VJ-Day came and we were out. One of my last views of the spit was a group of seamen burning several of the landing barges. My brother and I had hoped to try to buy one for our peacetime pursuits, but that was another story.

It was many years before I stumbled on the story behind the balloon that landed on Hornby Island. I was amazed to learn the extent of Japanese warfare in Canada. I knew of course about the Japanese submarine that shelled a lighthouse at

A Japanese incendiary bomb of the type flown to North America in balloons. At left is a battery container, possibly part of a device to prevent freezing at high altitudes. (From "The Beaver", December 1945).



Estevan Point, 20 June 1942, hurting no one. But this was a campaign of death and destruction and perhaps only the vagaries of the weather had saved our forests or our Western cities from an inferno. Today, few people remember the event.

Some accounts say the experiments leading up to the attack began in 1933 when silk and rubber balloons were devised. They, carried radios at first which automatically reported air conditions and altitudes. A problem was the splitting of seams of the balloons at high altitudes. The experiment was dropped after Pearl Harbor, but when the Americans bombed Tokyo, the plan was revived.

That was when the use of strong paper for the balloons was introduced. The paper was made from mulberry bark and it was coated with green persimmon juice in the same method that paper parasols were waterproofed for ages past.

The balloons weighed about 75 kilograms including four incendiary devices with a central high explosive bomb aimed at spreading the incendiaries in all directions. There was a valve to relieve pressure at high altitudes, a battery involved in triggering the bombs, four barometers and a number of sandbags for ballast.

The plan was to release the balloons in a manner that would ensure the Westerlies that blow steadily across the Pacific in certain seasons at high altitudes — 20,000 to 30,000 feet — would carry them to North America. School girls were pressed into service to make the balloons and in the late fall of 1944 the launchings began. In the following winter 9,000 balloons went over the Pacific.

There were difficulties. There were only about 50 days a year suitable for launching. And when the winds were strong enough to carry the balloons across the ocean in two or three days, the forests were cold and damp. Icing also caused losses. Those which did land and explode caused few fires. Lightning caused more. No one knows of course how many remain hidden in remote places or if they still are dangerous.

The Japanese estimated 10 per cent of the balloon bombs would reach North America but records show only 296 were found — eighty in Canada. Of these there were 57 known landings in B.C. between November 1944 and April 1945. One landed at Minton, Saskatchewan, but all but one of its bombs failed to go off. One got as far East as the Hudson's Bay Company post at Oxford House, Manitoba. One landed in the Northwest Territories and one in the Yukon. Three were shot down by RCAF aircraft.

The only loss of life due to the bombs occurred in Oregon, which with California, shared most of the landings. A minister lost his wife and five children when they disturbed a bomb they found while on a hike.

There apparently were fears that the Japanese might attempt to use the balloons to spread disease germs to North America, but in April 1945, the project was dropped and classified as a failure.

How many other blank pieces of paper carry such a story? You can see mine at the Military Museum in Rutherford Mall at Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Pete Loudon is a retired West Coast journalist. His Depression memoir, "Pride of the West" appeared in the April/May 1990 issue of "The Beaver".

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'Skunks' of Victoria Island

In August 1990, while undertaking research at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, I came across several startling entries in the journal for the HBC post at Read Island, just off the southwest shore of Victoria Island. On four separate occasions (20 February 1934; 2 February, 1 March and 14 December 1936) the post managers had recorded the trapping by local residents on Victoria Island of a *skunk*! The presence of skunks on Victoria Island just did not seem possible, for the northernmost recorded occurrence of the skunk (*Mephistis mephistis)* is around Fort Simpson and Great Slave Lake, some 900 miles to the south. Could I have inadvertently stumbled upon a freak zoological phenomenon?

The first skunk entry in the Read Island journal was recorded by C. Reiach, the next two by J.E. Sedgewick, and the last by F.R. Ross. It seemed unreasonable to conclude that all three post managers had misidentified similarly the animals brought in from the trap lines. Nevertheless, it seemed equally unreasonable that skunks had been trapped on Victoria Island. Nowhere in the entries of these three men did I find any hint of deliberate facetiousness, so I have had to conclude that the skunk entries were written in all seriousness.

Seeking further information, I consulted several zoologist friends in Ottawa. From them I learned that, from a zoological viewpoint, the animals simply could not have been skunks. In the first place, skunks are inactive creatures during

the winter months in cold climates, hibernating in underground dens, yet all four of the animals reported as skunks in the HBC journal were trapped on Victoria Island during the winter months. In the second place, skunks, like ground squirrels, could not reach Victoria Island from the mainland because of the 20-to-40 mile water/ice barrier between them, even if they had somehow managed to stray much farther north than heretofore reported.

Then I learned of the little-known nickname, "skunk bear", for that relatively large but scarce member of the weasel family, a year-round hunter and scavenger, the wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). This nickname was often used in the past by trappers in the Rocky Mountains, according to E.T. Seton (*Life histories of northern animals*, vol. 2, 1909, p. 945), and could easily have been picked up by the Read Island post managers when they stopped at HBC posts on their journeys down the Mackenzie River, *en route* from their homes in Britain, where there are no skunks. The nickname is thought to have arisen because the wolverine looked a little like a cross between a skunk and a black bear. Furthermore, like the skunk, it possesses anal glands capable of emitting a pungent odour, though it is less offensive than that of the skunk.

I have concluded, therefore, that the entries "skunks" in the Read Island journal cannot be taken literally, but refer instead to "skunk bears" (wolverines), the post managers writing the word simply as "skunks". I suspect, also, that the term was used pejoratively because of the trappers' dislike for this animal, which so often devoured the catches in their trap-lines.

Stuart E. Jenness,
Gloucester, Ontario

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The Old Theatres of Toronto

I am interested in the source for the illustration on page 12 of the August/September issue of *The Beaver*. Every source to which I have had occasion to refer, indicates the building depicted as the Grand Opera House which opened on Adelaide Street in Toronto on 21 September 1874, from which Ambrose Small disappeared on December 2, 1920 and which was demolished at the end of 1927.

The Toronto Opera House, a few doors west of the Grand, and also known as Jacob's & Sparrow's, opened on 30 August 1886 and was destroyed by fire in 1903 when Ambrose Small was manager. It was rebuilt as the Majestic Theatre with Ambrose Small advertised as proprietor from 1904 to 1910 when Wm. Morris assumed control. In 1916 it was renovated and became the Regent Theatre.

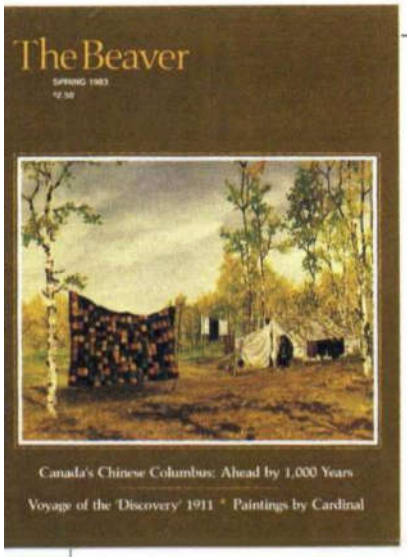
Joan Baillie,
Archivist,
The Joan Baillie Archives,
of the Canadian Opera Company,
Toronto, Ontario.

Editor's Note: The theatre identified as the "Toronto Opera House" in our August/September issue was, indeed, the Grand Opera House. The picture was discovered in a reference work (*A Stage in Our Past*, University of Toronto Press, 1967) and shared a page with the programme title for the Toronto Opera House. The caption for the picture of the Grand Opera House was printed on the opposite page. It was but the work of a moment to wrongly assume that the theatre that appeared under the programme title for the Toronto Opera House was none other than the said Toronto Opera House.

The Grand Opera House has always been connected with strange happenings. It was here that theatre magnate Ambrose Small was last seen in December 1920 before he vanished without trace in one of Canada's great "missing persons" mysteries.

The Toronto Opera House
a.k.a. "Jacob's & Sparrow's"

The Grand Opera House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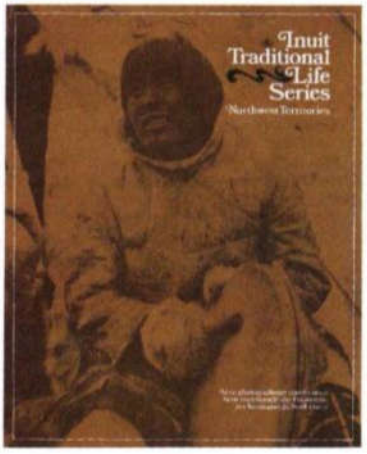

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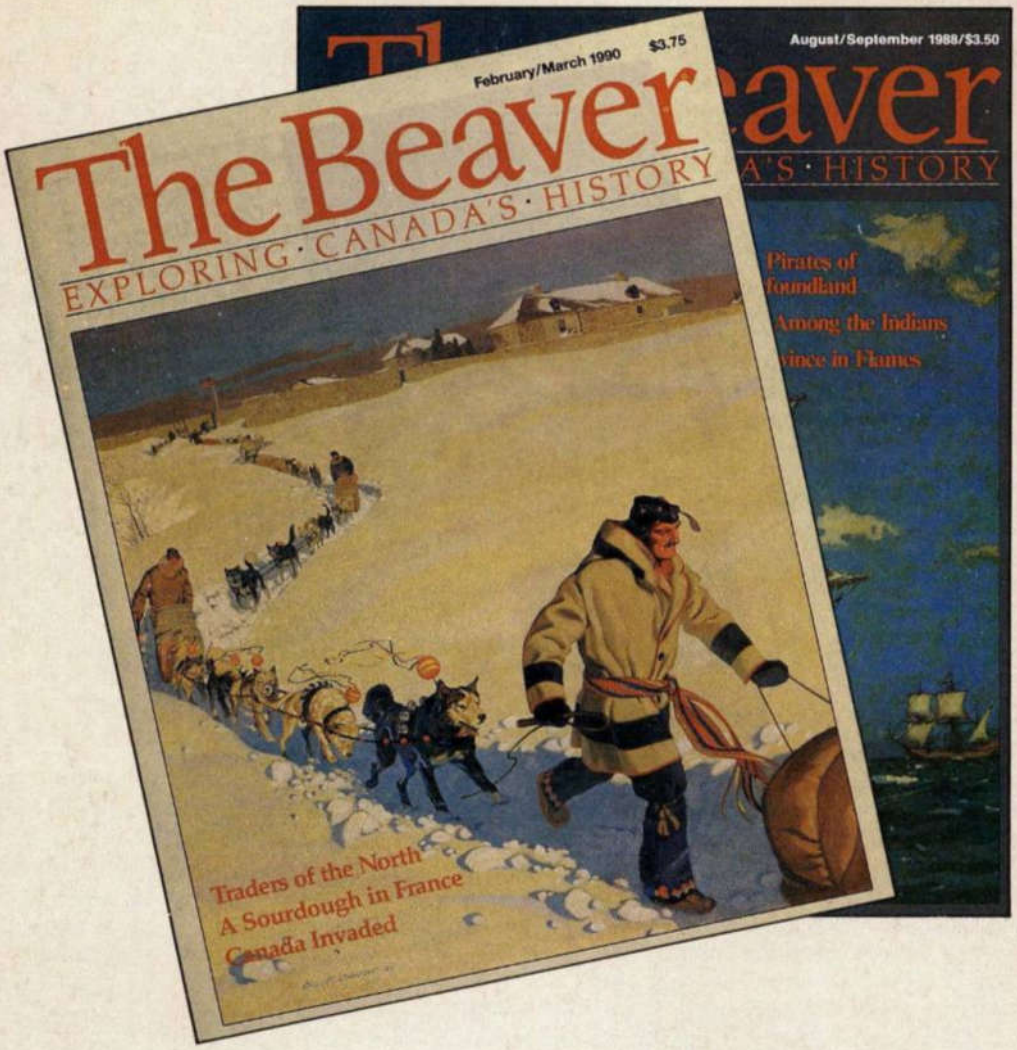

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